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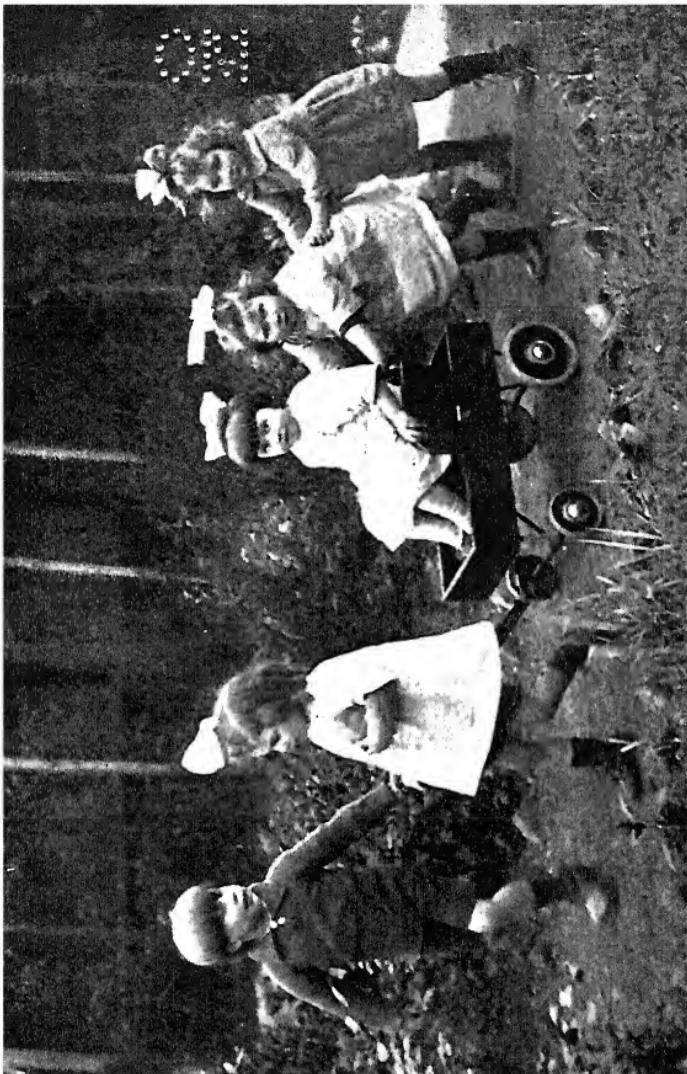
THE  
OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOL





*By courtesy of Photo Press*

OUT FOR A TROLIC



# THE OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOL

BY

E. STEVINSON

SUPERINTENDENT OF THE RACHEL McMILLAN  
OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOL

*Author of "Handwork and Social History,"  
"Pictures of Social Life"*



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IN MEMORIAM

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RACHEL McMILLAN

*"The Works of the Just are in the Hand of God"*



## INTRODUCTION

THIS vivid book, like Mr. Alec Paterson's *Across the Bridges*, makes the reader see things which he ought to see, and know things which he ought to know. It gives the human side, which had to be portrayed too sparingly in Mr. Charles Booth's great work on the life and labour of the people of London. It is full of experience, insight and observation. For us, living to-day, it has a plain message of citizenship. For those who come after us it will have the value of history. How much we should learn from such a book, if Pestalozzi had had time to write it, about the orphans whom he fed and washed and taught at Stanz!

Miss Stevenson records the names of many of the men and women who have helped forward the attempt to deal with the fundamental needs of the educational life of poor districts in this country. The nation owes them more thanks and honour than they are likely to get. But chief among those to whom this gratitude and reverence are due stand Rachel and Margaret McMillan. Their work has been seminal. Both, though happily one of the two is still actively at work, have given their lives for the future of England. As years go on, the significance of their work will become clear. They have pointed the way and have been to others what

## INTRODUCTION

Matthew Arnold tells us his father was to him. Compassion, courage, persistency, generous thrift, and the thoughtful adjustment of means to ends are the qualities called for by the finest kinds of social reform. These the two sisters have practised.

A generation which has learnt to see the greatness of William Blake will not fail to value what they have done for us and for the children in their care.

MICHAEL E. SADLER.

OXFORD, *November 1923.*

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# THE OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOL

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

#### THE CRY OF THE MOTHERS

It is not only in the rose,  
It is not only in the bird,  
Not only where the rainbow glows,  
Nor in the song of woman heard;  
But in the darkest, meanest things,  
There always, always something sings.

EMERSON

IT is half-past eight on a Monday morning in mid-October. The door of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School has been open for the last hour, and many little folk are trotting round the garden paths, shouting merry greetings to one another. Bathing operations are in full swing and the Nurse Teachers are already very busy, for payments are taken and new children admitted on the first day of the week.

To-day there are five vacant places. Three of our five-year-old children have gone on to the elementary schools in the district, and the parents of the remaining two have left the neighbourhood. Sixty or more names are on the waiting list, and five parents have been asked to call and bring their children to see us.

Here comes Mrs. Baker. She is an old friend, a stout, jolly woman with curly red hair. Her cap is set well on the back of her head and she advances

with a rolling gait, arms akimbo. "Will'um," her small son, clutches at her voluminous skirts as he trots beside her. She is followed by a little thin wisp of a woman with anxious, frightened eyes.

"'Ere we are, Nurse!" calls Mrs. Baker. "'Ere's Mrs. Tyler with 'er Edith May. She lives agin me so I brought 'er along. Show Nurse Edith May, old pal."

Mrs. Taylor is carrying her baby carefully wrapped in a large shawl. She folds back one corner of the wrap and discloses the small pale face of a little girl, apparently about three years old. Glancing nervously at the Superintendent:

"She *can* walk, Miss," she says, hurriedly. "On'y give 'er the back of a chair to 'old on to and she can get along beautiful. She's a real strong child is our Edith May tho' she mayn't look it. It's all along of 'er 'avin' been tied to the table that's made 'er weak on 'er pins." The little mite inside the shawl sits up and protests, feebly crying. Her mother hushes her tenderly. "She don't cry often, Nurse. She's a real good child, but she ain't used to folks."

"Do you go out to work?" asks the Superintendent, as she takes down particulars of the child's age and address.

"Why, yes, Miss. There's on'y me to work. 'Er father's dead. Mrs. Mason, me neighbour, she's minded Edith May till now. But ever since the kiddie got burned Mrs. Mason's nervous like, and so whenever she's busy she takes and ties 'er up to the table leg. 'Arf a crown a week I pay 'er to keep Edith May. But it seems as if the babby oughter be walkin' now, and, Miss, it'd be a god-send if I could get 'er in 'ere, so it would." And the mother's anxious eyes follow the sturdy little figures of our toddlers as they trot to and fro along the garden paths.

"I'd like our Edith May to get a bit er colour in 'er cheeks and to run like them," she says wistfully.  
"She don't know what a garden is, pore mite."

Feebly protesting, little Edith May is carried to the Toddlers' Shelter. The mother kisses her and hurries away, waving her hand in farewell; and at that moment Edith May doubtless longs for the familiar table leg. But she is soon consoled, and her anxious little mother, peeping round the corner ten minutes later, sees her happily hugging a Teddy bear and watching the nurse ladle hot porridge into rows of waiting basins.

"'Ere, Miss, is this the Creeche?"

"No, this is the Nursery School. We don't take babies under two years old."

"Well, my Gertie's three. I've had 'er nime down and a nurse called and told me to bring 'er to-day." The speaker is a tall, slatternly girl, untidily dressed in a tawdry green velvet blouse and black skirt. A much-betrimmed hat is pinned to her unkempt hair. Her restless roving black eyes and loose lips tell a story that is not difficult to read.

"Is this Gertie?"

"Yes, this is my Gert. Come 'ere, you brat." Roughly, but not unkindly, she pulls the child forward.

"Do you go out to work?"

"'Ow can I, with 'er to mind? But I want to."

"Does your husband work?"

"I ain't got no husband."

At this juncture Gertie peeps out from behind her mother's skirts. She is a bonny child, with bright blue eyes and curly hair. But all down one side of her face runs an irregular disfiguring scar, and when one speaks to her she blinks rapidly and shrinks away.

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"How did she get that scar?"

The mother speaks sullenly. "It was this way. I was out doin' a bit of shoppin', and Gertie she took and fell on the fender and cut 'er bloomin' little 'ed. Silly little fool she were! Me neighbour were called in and she took Gert orf to the 'ospital and when I come 'ome she were all stitched up. It were a shime. She did 'oller, didn't you, Gert? So I out with their stitches meself, strite away. I wouldn't 'ave it. Can you take 'er, Nurse?"

Yes, we will find room for Gertie.

"Nurse! 'Ave you a place for our Sonny?"

"Oh! Mrs. Thomas! Good morning! Of course we'd like to have Sonny. Didn't you put his name down?"

"Why, yes, Nurse, I believe I *did*. But you see I mide a little mistike. It's 'is bufday to-day, and I said as 'ow 'e wouldn't be two till next December. Silly, now weren't I? Got mixed up with me other children. Must 'ave been because we 'ad such a mild winter that I mide the mistike, I guess. But I says to me 'usband before I come out, when I 'ad er chance of er bit er work: 'Bill,' I says, 'w'en were our Sonny born?' Bill 'e says, 'W'y, the same day we bought our donkey for the barrer, and sure-lee that was the 15th of October? Must a' been! Disy,' he says—'e was allers one for a joke—'Disy, you'll be forgettin' your own nime next. Do 'e *look* like a babby of one year ten months, I ask yer?'"

"Well, Mrs. Thomas, you bring his birth certificate along, will you?"

"Oh, that there thing, Miss! Don't know what-ever I done with it."

"You know, Mrs. Thomas, it isn't his turn yet. I guess you'll find the certificate before that comes round."

Poor Mrs. Thomas! She is such a kindly soul, and ever ready to help her neighbours. But we strongly suspect that she will not produce the certificate yet awhile—possibly not for two months.

And now there comes in at the gate a woman in a very pitiful condition. Her long black skirt trails on the ground, her boots bulge and gape, and her eyes wander restlessly. She has the appearance of a hunted creature.

"Are you the one we arks about the bibies? We've come about Be'trice. We goes out with a barrel-organ and we've bin takin' 'er with us, but the coppers made a row about it and we daresent do it no more. Can you 'ave 'er, Nurse?" The woman pauses anxiously, then turns to a man who has come in behind her leading a child of about three years old: "Look, Jim; look at the little blighters. Wouldn't you like our Be'trice 'ere? She's orf to play with 'em. Ain't she a corf-drop? Bless 'er 'art! Do you keep the kids at night, Miss? We ain't got no 'ome, and when we take the little 'un in with us to the boardin' 'ouse they are that insultin'. They can't abide kids. We'll pay anything, Miss, if only you'll take 'er in. Couldn't you manage just to find room for 'er?" Be'trice came dancing up, shouting and laughing. Who could resist her? As we walk together down to the Babies' Shelter the mother continues: "She ain't as clean as I could wish. I daresent take orf her clothes at night in case they'd be pinched. So I'll be real glad for 'er to 'ave a barf. But do be careful of 'er, as she's terrible subject to the corf and she ain't used to the water."

So the anxious woman goes off happily, and on the way out she passes Mrs. O'Hara, one of our jolliest mothers. Mrs. O'Hara bears down upon us breezily, her baby in her arms, Johnnie running

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behind hand in hand with a tiny white-faced boy of four years old.

"Oh! Nurse, on Saturday I 'ad sech a time as never was with this 'ere little baggage," shaking the baby lovingly. The baggage gurgles and fixes us with big solemn blue eyes.

"The blessed creature swallered a safety-pin. I turned 'er upside down, and I patted and I shook the life near out of 'er to make 'er corf up that pin, but *she* wouldn't. So I never stopped to get no coat nor 'at. Orf I sets with the baby to the 'ospital and tells the nurse that me baby 'as swallered a safety-pin. The doctor got the thing to look at her inside——"

"X rays?" (inquiringly).

"Yes, them rays, and 'e turned 'em on 'er. I waited all of a tremble. Doctor, 'e comes to me and says, 'Mother,' 'e says, "'Ere's your baby and the safety-pin tight in 'er 'and all the time.' "

"Ah! Miss, I could 'ave shook the biby, bless 'er, all to bits. Look at 'er now. She's winkin'!" Sure enough, the baby, in her efforts to get one pink fist crammed into her mouth, *was* solemnly closing one eye at us.

"But, Nurse, I'm forgettin' what I come for. 'Ere's 'Erbert Green. He's consumptive, and Mrs. Green's my neighbour. She's 'ad ten and buried eight, she 'as. The baby lies a-bed with 'er now and 'ere's 'Erbert left. She sees my Johnnie a-bustin' out of 'is clothes and too proud to sit down to his meals without a tablecloth, and that 'appy and all, and she's set 'er 'art on 'er 'aving 'er 'Erbert 'ere. The doctor at the school says 'e oughter be in the open air. Can you take 'im, Miss?"

Poor little pale-faced Herbert looks about him wistfully. Big Johnnie, protecting, shows him the beauties of the garden. We decide that Herbert

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shall come to-morrow and see our own doctor, and if she agrees that it is right for him to be with the other children we will take him. So off Johnnie runs to his own shelter and Mrs. O'Hara takes Herbert's hand. "Can't eat anything, Nurse, not even a bit of fish and chips," says she mournfully. "All skin and bone 'e is"; and as they go outside the gate it is borne in upon us within that unless we find a place for little Herbert *quickly*, he will not be here to take it when it is found.

More mothers stream through the gate. More names are entered in the book.

Is there no need for Nursery Schools in our slum areas? Would that the unconvinced could then suggest some way to solve our mothers' problems!

## CHAPTER II

### MORE ABOUT OUR MOTHERS

These things I, seizing you by the shoulders, will shake you till you understand them! For a certainty you are not greater nor less than me. I neither look upon you with envy nor with pity, with deference nor with contempt. Endowments and accomplishments are of no account whatever, but honesty—and to stand in time under the great law of Equality—after which you will be satisfied and joy will take possession of you.

CARPENTER.

Two questions are put to us, as teachers in the Nursery School, more often than I can say. The first is: "Are you not taking away the responsibility of the mothers when you build Nursery Schools and tend their children for them?" The second: "Is not the home the proper and orthodox place in which to bring up the young children?"

Our answer to the second question is short and to the point: "Go and visit ten or twelve typical slum homes and then continue to say, if you dare, that they are fit and proper places in which to bring up God's children." In answer to the first question, we would definitely state that it is not our intention to take away the responsibility of the mother. Our aim is rather to awaken her to a sense of her own great responsibility. We try to educate the mother with the child, and when we take the child we accept also a certain amount of responsibility for the mother.

Almost all our mothers love their children. The trouble is that some love them so unwisely. They can deny them nothing, and this loving unwisdom is the root-cause of most of our difficulties.

Take the case of Mrs. Brown. She is a gentle, brave little woman who spends almost half her time in hospital fighting tuberculosis. She is very proud of her two children. What wonder? She has lost eight little ones within the last twelve years.

Alexander, the elder of the two children, is a great favourite in the Nursery School. He has a violent temper, but when he is in one of his charming moods he wins all hearts. "When he is good he is very good indeed, but when he is bad he is horrid." He is not beautiful. He has rather a stunted figure with a bullet head and a raucous voice. To an outsider he might even appear unattractive, but one and all his teachers fall victims to his charms. He disciplines them well. They know that when they stand up to Alexander they are in for a bad time, for rumour hath it that once, when seriously annoyed, he wailed on end for two hours. But when he is really interested Alexander is a delightful person to teach, for he becomes utterly absorbed in what he is doing. His whole expression changes and he learns with lightning rapidity.

Alexander has his mother well in hand—he cuddles her and she is his slave. Watch her on the way to the Nursery one hot July morning. Her cough is troublesome and she carries wee, auburn-haired Kitty in her arms while Alexander, aged three, trudges at her side. The children have had no breakfast save a sip of mother's tea—for porridge and milk will be served to them at school. They have to pass the sweetstuff shop at the corner, where trays of unwholesome sweets are laid out—pink, yellow, brown and black sweets—jujubes, "hundreds and thousands," sugar-sticks and sherbert. The flies are very active this morning swarming over the sticky trays, while here and there a wasp bumps drowsily against the dirty window-pane.

Alexander is fascinated! He tugs at his mother's skirts and points at the highly-coloured dainties. She feebly resists. "You'll have nice porridge directly, my duck," she tells him. Alexander opens his mouth and wails; then he roars, and finally he stamps and screams. Is it any wonder that his mother sometimes gives in? She is utterly weary; she loves him and hates to see him cry. And so it often turns out that Alexander comes forth from the shop triumphant, to enjoy all that the flies have left of a bright pink sugar-stick. His mother knows that the poisonous colouring matter and cheap sugar are bad for him—especially as he has had no breakfast as yet. Sores constantly break out on his face and ears, and he has no appetite for wholesome food. But he smiles upon her and trots happily by her side, and all is sunshine in their little world.

What are we going to do about it? Well, we take away the sweets if the children bring them into the Nursery School, and we know that from eight o'clock in the morning till half-past five at night no unwholesome food is consumed. Then we talk to the mothers in the mornings, in the evenings, and at the club, and the school doctor talks to them when she examines the children. We find that the horrid little wisps of newspaper do not appear so frequently within the gates as the children get accustomed to plain food and the discipline of the Nursery School. If the mother declines to listen to us and the child suffers from sores in consequence, we have to exclude him and tell the mother to take him daily to the Clinic until he is cured.

It is very difficult to make our mothers realise the dangers of infection. Little Lily Jacobs came to school one day with red and inflamed eyes. Obviously she was suffering from conjunctivitis. The teacher went home with Lily and asked the

mother to take her regularly to the Clinic and have her eyes bathed—then she would soon be well and able to come back to school.

"Bless you, Miss," cried Mrs. Jacobs, arms akimbo, "that ain't conjunctivitis! That's the draughts in the 'ouse. Every door and winder in the place rattles like mad—fit to drive yer crazy. That's what's the matter with my Lily! Conjunctivitis? Not it, Miss! Why, look at our Georgie, he's got sore eyes. Look at me, ain't I got 'em? Look at our Bill! We're all the same, Miss, every one of us, and don't that *prove* it's the winders?"

Alas! Mrs. Jacobs must be registered as one of our failures. We could not prevail. If Lily might not attend school to-day she should never come again. "The draughts done it." We must not doubt her word, and so we lost Lily. There are still Mrs. Jacobses amongst the ranks of our mothers—but not so many as there were last year.

Mrs. Roberts is a thin, delicate girl of eighteen—an over-anxious mother. Her little two year old Ronnie has had delicate lungs from birth. Mrs. Roberts is a widow. She goes out to work daily, and Ronnie is the joy of her life. "Nurse, if I can't keep 'im out of the 'ospital I'll go mad," she says. "I must 'ave 'im to come 'ome to at nights."

One bitterly cold January morning little Mrs. Roberts trailed into the Nursery, wan-eyed and sorrowful. Ronnie lay in her arms white and exhausted, breathing heavily. The Nurse gently took him from her.

"'E seemed so ill last night, Nurse," she said, "sneezing and coughing, that I shut up the winders and doors and stopped all the cracks. I lighted a fire and put 'im in bed with all 'is clothes a-top of 'im. It was so 'ot I could 'ardly bear. I 'ad to sit outside meself. But I thought, poor lamb, if I made

'im real 'ot at night 'e perhaps would not take such cold when 'e come out in the morning. Now 'e catches 'is breath like, and I'm frightened for 'im."

Little Ronnie did not die. Perhaps his mother's need of him was too great. She gave up her work and nursed him through a severe attack of pneumonia, helped and advised by Nursery School teacher and district nurse.

Grandmother Ruffle brought her two little grandchildren to the Nursery one hot morning in August—Victoria, aged two, and Maudie aged four. It was the hour for bathing, and operations were in full swing in the Toddlers' Shelter. Grandmother stood by the shelter, scratching her ear thoughtfully. At length she spoke. "Miss," quoth she, "these 'ere children are orphans—they ain't got no father nor mother neither. You wouldn't go for to bath them, Miss, now would yer? It wouldn't be right."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Ruffle," said the nurse in charge, "we always bath our babies. They love it. Look at them!"

"Ah, Miss," was grandmother's sage reply. "We often like what's bad for us and does us 'arm. Our Victoria 'll catch 'er death of cold if you try it on with 'er. I don't 'old with newfangled ways meself." But she left the children in our care. We bathed them and they are still alive—indeed, they flourish.

Many of our mothers put too many clothes on their children. It is hard to make them realise how unhealthy it is to wrap up the little bodies in such warm and heavy clothing.

One little boy came to us who suffered from a weak chest. We found that he was wrapped round and round in layers of newspaper soaked in camphorated oil. How long this padding had enveloped his poor little body I should not like to say.

Some of the children are dressed much more warmly on Monday than on Thursday. The shadow of the pawnshop looms darkly and heavily over the Nursery School. Boots are often requisitioned on Wednesday, and the poor little owners see them no more until after pay-day (Friday).

Most of our mothers are Peter Pans. What chance have they to grow up? Before their school-days are over they are put in charge of the babies of the family. When they leave school they go out to work, and at an early age they marry and have children of their own. After that life is one ceaseless round of work and worry. There is no time to clean the house, no time to sew, and, above all, no time to think. There is only time to earn money and buy food to satisfy the little clamouring mouths.

They wander into the gardens—our mothers—in the grey of winter mornings, pulling their shawls around their shoulders, coughing and talking to the children in shrill voices. Tenderly they bid the little ones farewell, and then back they trudge to the wash-tub or the factory. In the evening, when the day's work is done, we see them once more. Their arms are hungry for their wee ones and their faces are alight with love.

They are very wonderful and very lovable. They can endure—life has taught them that lesson. Their patience is almost terrible. But they find it very difficult to make any effort, for they are always tired. And so it is uphill work for them and for us.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CHILDREN OF OUR SLUM AREAS

Here is Thy footstool, and here rest Thy feet where live the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.

When I bow to Thee my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where Thy feet rest amongst the poorest, the lowliest and the lost.—RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

THE children of our slum areas suffer terribly to-day from overcrowding and bad conditions. The open spaces and parks are usually too difficult of access for the wee ones—the gutters and mean streets must be their playgrounds. The gutter is a thrilling spot, full of surprises and fraught with much interest, but it does not make a very safe or hygienic playground for a baby girl or boy.

When it so happens that the mother of the family must go out to work she is faced with this question: What shall she do with those of her little ones under school age? She must lock her house door, or her property may be stolen. Shall the children be left inside or outside that closed door? A friendly neighbour will probably promise to keep an eye on little Maggie or Tom, but still the problem has to be faced.

Suppose the little ones are locked inside, there is always the danger of an accident, especially in winter time with the fire alight. Last December one of the teachers from the Rachel McMillan Nursery School called at a house near by, to tell the mother we had now room to take her baby. The little one's name had been on the waiting-list for weeks. The door of the house stood open and,

unable to attract anyone's attention, the teacher stepped inside. She found herself in a spotlessly clean room almost bereft of furniture. But there on a little table in the centre was a coffin, and inside lay a little waxen form, the smiling baby face pillow'd in flowers.

'The mother came forward from the back of the room.

"I left 'er 'ere, Nurse, last Toosday with our Rose Mary, just 'arf a mo' while I ran round to borrer a cupful of flour from Mrs. Brown. Our Rose Mary's five year old, so she *oughter* know 'ow to mind a biby by now. But when I come back with me flour in me 'and me sweet lamb was all of a blaze, and our Rose Mary was screaming 'er 'art out. There weren't no savin' 'er. And, Miss, I'd often pictured 'er as I passed by the Baby Camp, a-playin' with them red engines, a-draggin' them round the path. It do seem 'ard."

"How beautiful she looks, and what lovely flowers!"

"I 'adn't any money, Nurse, to buy flowers for 'er. So I charges a penny for folks to come and see the corpse, and that's 'ow I got me flowers; I've made a tidy bit. Them lilies cost a lot."

Is it worse to run these terrible risks inside, or to brave the dangers of the gutter and the traffic without?

Suppose we visit another home. Would that we could take with us some of the people who deem Nursery Schools an unnecessary luxury! But they will certainly not come with us, so we will go and see Mrs. Harding alone. Johnnie did not come to school yesterday; we will find out what is the matter with him.

The door of the house where Mrs. Harding lives stands wide open. The passage, with its oak

panelling, is very dark, for this is one of the fine old Elizabethan houses still standing in Deptford. Up the winding dirty staircase, with its carved banisters, we tread to the top of the house. Groping carefully, we knock at a certain door.

"Come in!"

How shall we get across that room to the bed where Johnnie lies, with mother standing beside him? It is an enormous four-poster, and Johnnie sleeps there nightly with father, mother and Davy. Johnnie sleeps across the foot. Baby rests in the "pram" beside the bed, and Mary in a stretcher between the big bed and the door. There is "a nice bit of fire" in the grate. The coal is kept in a bulging cardboard box "close 'andy.'" Tea, sugar, bread and margarine are on the mantel-piece, together with the remains of a fried-fish supper. The window-pane has been broken, and the hole stuffed with all sorts of garments. The draught caused by the opening of the door causes the sleeve of father's shirt to fly out and flap threateningly at us. A large can of water and a bowl stand by the window.

Advancing cautiously across the floor, we are smitten on the head with something cold and clammy.

"'Old 'ard, Nurse. I done a bit 'er washin' to-day," cries our hostess. We look up. Strings are fastened across and across the walls—lines of strings. The damp garments hang nearest the fire—the family wardrobe hangs over the bed.

"I'm keepin' Johnnie warm, Nurse. I was afraid yesterday 'e was going to sicken for the scarlet. But I tied this 'ere bloater round 'is neck just to ease 'im, like. 'E's much better now. Will you look at 'im, Miss, as you are 'ere?"

Yes, we will, Mrs. Harding, if we can get to the

bed. Stepping over the coal-box, winding our way round the head of Mary's stretcher, catching our ankles on the wheels of baby's pram and nearly overturning the water-can—we arrive at last by the bedside and examine Johnnie. We suggest the removal of the bloater, and after some argument this is done. We make and suggest plans for the comfort of Johnnie. Mrs. Harding listens indulgently. "*You'd* think twice about washin' 'im, Nurse, if you'd to fetch every mite o' water from the scullery, and if you'd to 'eat it up in a kettle what leaks."

Yes, Mrs. Harding, I guess we should!

"And that there Mrs. Smith, what lives in the room where the tap is, she's that contrary, and 'olds on to the tap so you'd think she was the Deptford Water Works itself! But there, miss, I'll wash 'im for yer."

Of course our children come from many types of home. Mrs. Roberts owns a small shop in the neighbourhood. Her children are beautifully tended and her house is spotlessly clean. She sends her children to our Nursery School, and helps us enormously by her loyalty and by the good example she sets the other mothers.

Mrs. Wilmot has three rooms right at the top of Frobisher's Buildings, up six flights of stairs. She has only two children, Melia and Bella. One day she came to the Nursery School dressed in highly respectable black. The black "bugles" in her bonnet nodded respectability, and respectability waved triumphant from the coloured handkerchiefs pinned cornerwise with safety-pins upon the narrow chests of Melia and Bella.

Mrs. Wilmot regarded the Superintendent severely.

"Yes, I was thinking about 'em coming to school, Miss," she said, "though I don't 'old with schools.

I don't want to send 'em, but I'm forced, because I'm going into 'orspital meself to-morrow. I'm not a lady as mixes up with me neighbours, and Bella and Melia they've kept theirselves to theirselves ever since they was born. I don't 'old with children playing in the streets, and its always been my dooty to keep my children respectable. Penny for life and penny for death I've insured 'em.

"Of a morning, after I've washed 'em, I set Melia in one chair and Bella in another, and I've learnt 'em to sit quite still and not get theirselves messed up. They are good children, Miss, though I says it. Never say a word, and where you put 'em, there they'll set."

Two little puffy white faces, two little snubby noses, two little soft mouths hanging open, and two pairs of great grey wistful eyes. With silky hair beautifully kept, in neatly mended cotton frocks, Melia and Bella stood confessed one on each side of mother.

"Adenoids!" The thought flashed across the mind of the Superintendent, but never a word she said, lest Bella and Melia be snatched from her in horror. She took the little girls by the hands—such cold flabby hands!—and they bid farewell to mother.

Melia and Bella were nearly five, although they looked but three years old. Miss Pitts, to whose shelter they were taken, took charge of them. She found them little chairs, gave them picture books and toys, and tried to make them talk, but though Bella and Melia would nod and shake their heads, they would not speak. At dinner-time if fed they would eat, but when left alone they gazed vacantly round at the other children.

"Aren't they pretty, Nursie!" cried sturdy Tommy, admiringly, "but can't they *talk*?"

## CHILDREN OF OUR SLUM AREAS 19

Tommy dived down into the depths of a grubby pocket and produced a great treasure—a cigarette card. "Here!" He put it into Melia's hand. It fell on the floor—the little fingers did not close round it. Disgusted, Tommy ran off, more interesting fish to fry.

"Where you put 'em, there they'll set."

We were able to get a "medical" on Melia and Bella. The doctor reported that they were suffering from general debility and unfit for the elementary school. They are improving wonderfully. They shout and race and dance now with the merriest of children.

The dirt with which we have to contend with in the slums is deplorable. The overworked mother is often far too tired to heat water to bathe her child at the end of a long day. Still less is she likely to wash the bedclothes often enough to keep the bed in a sanitary condition and free from vermin.

Cleansing stations have been established in different parts of our great cities, and verminous children as a last resort are sent thither to be cleansed! To be cleansed? When? And how often? This cleansing is deeply resented by the very people the authorities are trying to help. It is considered a punishment and a disgrace. If Nursery Schools were to spring up throughout the country many, if not all, these cleansing stations could be closed.

These methods of desperation would become unnecessary if we could claim for the children of the poor even a small portion of the nurture and education deemed necessary for the children of the well-to-do.

Impetigo is in its origin the direct result of dirt. Many evils are the result of dirt. Running ears trouble us. They are sometimes the result of debility after an attack of scarlet fever or measles;

20 OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOL

but they, like many other evils, often in their origin are due to dirt. Sore eyes are very painful, and if neglected they become dangerous. They must also be numbered amongst our common afflictions.

The doctor tells us that eighty per cent. of the children we admit suffer from rickets. Tuberculosis is a scourge. And it should be remembered that all these diseases are preventable; the sun heals many of our rickety children in three months.

## CHAPTER IV

### GEORGIE

HE came strolling in at the gate one morning in September, a quaint little figure, his nether parts attired in very ragged trousers, his curly head enveloped in an enormous cap. He trotted along the garden path, clambered down the wooden staircase, walked in at the Junior Shelter, and sat down at one of the breakfast tables. Here he was discovered by Miss Hurn.

"What is your name, little man?" she asked.

He smiled—a bewitching smile.

"Georgie 'Olland,'" he told her.

"Where do you live, Georgie?"

"In there!" Georgie pointed with a grubby forefinger to the interior of the shelter.

"Where's your mummie?" she asked.

Georgie smiled still more sweetly and pointed the same grubby forefinger straight at her. Her heart was won.

Bewildered and much intrigued by Georgie, the teachers held a consultation. Together they questioned the young man, but nothing further could they learn of his home or his parents. Inquiries were made of the mothers and of the men standing outside the gates. Georgie's home and parentage still remained a mystery.

At last the Superintendent sought the aid of the jolly policeman at the corner. He had often helped her before in distressful times.

"Why, yes, I'll take the little chap to the police

station," quoth he. "That's where they'll come to find him."

It seemed hard to tear Georgie away from his new-found friends, and we compromised with the officer. He agreed to report Georgie at the police station, and to leave the little chap with us until after he had his dinner.

Meanwhile Georgie was enjoying himself; but he refused to be parted from his large cap or from his "mum" as he tested the resources of the Nursery School.

Dinner-time came. The older children gathered round "the little lost boy" and clamoured to be allowed to sit beside him. But great was their horror when they found that he used his fingers instead of his spoon to convey fish and potatoes to his mouth! And sore was the indignation of little Miss Julia Peacock, his neighbour, when, having safely disposed of his own repast, Georgie incontinently grabbed hers and demolished that! Miss Julia doubtless felt that she paid dearly for the honour of sitting beside the hero of the occasion.

One o'clock brought our friend the officer. So friendly, big and jolly he appeared that Georgie left us without a murmur, waving his hand and shouting cheerfully:

"Comin' back to-morrow, Mum an' all!"

During the course of the afternoon the policeman returned to tell us that on his way to the police station he met one of Georgie's cousins, and this lad was able to direct him to the child's home.

"His dad's very grateful to you for keeping him," said the officer, "and he's coming down to Camp to see you to-night."

About half-past five Georgie's father came in—a tall man with a slightly bent figure and dark, kind eyes which reminded one of the child.

"I want to thank you all for being so kind to the little chap," he said. "He's got no mother—she died when he were just over a year old. It's been a hard fight for me with four lads to bring up, and the eldest a cripple an' all. I looked after the little 'un meself till I got work, and since then the cripple lad 'as had him. 'E's a good lad, my Bob, but some days the pain's so bad that he can't get out, and then the little 'un 'as to stop inside too. He's a rare one for the streets, but I daresent let him out alone and him just turned three, so I says to him that I'll bring 'im round to the Nursery School. Ever' since then 'e's been at me. 'Take me to the Camp, Dad,' says 'e of a mornin'. I put him off two or three days, because I was late and I didn't just know how to get 'im in. 'Tisn't as if he had a mother. Well, Miss, you must know yourself how easy it is to put things of. So you see, Miss, when I was out he took 'issself to school. That's 'ow it was. And if you'll kindly keep 'im I'll bring 'im reg'lar."

So Georgie began his school-days.

Promptly at a quarter-past eight he trots in at the gate, the cripple brother limping painfully behind him. Gaily he greets his "mum" and his playmates, and cheerfully he smiles upon us all.

His chestnut curls are brushed and shining now—he has discarded the disfiguring cap, his garments are neat, and he looks very bonny clad in a brightly-coloured overall. He wields his spoon demurely, and is learning to respect his neighbour's pudding. Georgie the motherless sought the Nursery School. His need of it was great. There are many Georgies to-day. But where are the Nursery Schools which should prove their haven of refuge?

## CHAPTER V

### THE OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOL

The flowers are happy in the garden,  
For the bees are always there;  
The clouds are happy up in Heaven  
With angels in the air;  
But little boy and little mouse  
Are rather lonely in the house

LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA.

THE Open-Air Nursery School is a garden, round the walls of which are built long, low shelters. The garden belongs to the children, and in planning it we must sweep away all our own grown-up, pre-conceived ideas. Away with cabbages, onions and carrots! Let us have beautiful grassy lawns upon which we may run, and concrete for use in wet weather. When scores of pairs of stout little legs need exercise, we must make use of all our available space.

The garden must be an interesting place. There must be little paths that wind in and out of the flower-beds, and steps for adventurers to climb. Ribstalls should be fastened to the garden walls, and balancing boards provided.

We must have trees and a brave show of flowers—Michaelmas daisies, chrysanthemums, daffodils and tulips, roses and geraniums. The children from our drab dark streets rejoice in the flowers just as they love their gaily-coloured overalls and ribbons.

Then we must not forget the herb garden, so unparalleled for the sense training. Our little Toddlers trot round the paths hand in hand, smelling



**THE OPEN-AIR SCHOOL**



one flower and examining another, and we can almost hear one of them say as his little curly head bends over the swelling buds these sunny mornings in February:

Little brown houses and what do you hold?  
Treasures of purple and crimson and gold?  
Kings, queens and princesses wear robes like these,  
Tell us who lives in you, brown houses, please!

We must think of our pets too, and make provision for them. Which is the sunniest place for our aviary? Where shall the pigeon-house stand? Where shall we put the rabbits and the hens? For it is of no use to provide pets for the children if they cannot be kept happy and in a healthy condition, and it is never too soon to awaken in the children a sense of their responsibility for the lower creation.<sup>1</sup>

Each Shelter should be very simply furnished, and should accommodate a group of thirty-five to fifty children. "Necessities, but no luxuries," must be our motto in the Nursery School to-day, while the economy axe still hangs threateningly over our heads, and misery and want are at our gates.

We need no luxuries. We must have tables and chairs and beds, plenty of blackboard space, and plenty of cupboard room. Cupboards are necessary, for beds, blankets, chairs and tables must all be packed away at night in an Open-Air School.

Every Shelter should have its own bathroom, and there must be an abundance of hot water. The Toddlers' bathroom should be provided with several pot-baths fitted with hot and cold water taps, and raised from the ground for the convenience of the Staff. There should be a separate sink for washing purposes. Pegs should be fixed to the walls, upon

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller description of a Nursery School Garden see *The Nursery School*, by Margaret McMillan.

which the children's towels and flannels can be hung, and racks must be provided for the many toothbrushes. Needless to say, all the children's property must be carefully marked.

The bathroom for the older children should have little wash-hand basins—for the three-year-old has arrived at the dignity of "washing mine own self." There should be a large tiled bath here—roomy enough to accommodate three or four children at one time, and provided with a hot and cold spray. It is a great joy to the children to play in the bath together, and the water is kept running all the time, so that there is no risk of infection.

The door of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School is opened at half-past seven in the morning, and remains open until half-past five. Some of the mothers must be at work by eight o'clock, and they are glad to leave their babies with us on their way to the factory. The majority of children come in between eight and nine. We are often asked by visitors, "Is not this a very inconvenient arrangement? Would it not be better to have a fixed time for the children to assemble?" As a matter of fact, the present arrangement suits us well—for it makes it more possible for the Heads of the Departments to examine each child upon arrival. Visitors also ask us whether we tell the mothers not to trouble to bathe their children. On the contrary, we expect the mothers to help us in every way they can, and it is noticeable that after we have had the children for some time the mothers begin to take much more pride in their personal appearance.

After a little one has been greeted and examined by the Head of the Department, he passes on to the bathroom. Perhaps he is to enjoy a good splash in the white-tiled bath; perhaps he only needs to wash his face and hands in one of the low basins

He is provided with flannel, towel and toothbrush. They hang on his own peg, and he knows where to find them and how to hang them up again when he has finished with them. Attention to hair, teeth and nails follows.

Dinner is always a serious affair. All the children above three years of age learn to help themselves from the little serving dish passed round by the "monitor." We instituted this practice in order to try and teach them not to be greedy, but to take just as much food as they require. Of course the Nurse Teachers, who are superintending the meal, watch carefully to see that each little one takes enough, and it is astonishing to find how their appetites improve after a few weeks of plain, good food and open-air life.

When dinner is over, the bigger children are proud to help clear away the dinner plates and dishes, roll up the tablecloths, sweep the floor and put out the beds. Then each little person is rolled up in a big warm blanket and popped down in his camp-bed.

Every child in the Nursery School is expected to sleep, or at least to rest, after dinner. Occasionally the mothers ask us if their children may be excused the sleep, but we make no exception to this rule, and they soon find that the mid-day nap does not interfere with the children's rest at nights.

The two-year-old will sometimes sleep soundly for two hours—the three-year-old for an hour or an hour and a half. Some of the "fours" or just turned "fives" do not sleep, but they are trained to lie quietly for at least three-quarters of an hour. Only under very exceptional circumstances do we wake our children from the mid-day sleep, and it is not uncommon on a Monday to find one or two Toddlers still sleeping soundly at half-past three, despite the hubbub going on around them.

Monday morning! Careless and weary mothers—new mothers—sometimes come late to the Nursery School carrying fretful, wailing babies. The little ones have missed their regular food, and their digestions are upset; they have missed their mid-day sleep and their nerves are out of order. Sore eyes and ears have been neglected, and heads are not always clean.

Black Monday indeed! But happily the babies usually sleep soundly when once they are tucked up, and by Tuesday morning the effects of the week-end have worn off.

Of course this is not the case with "old" and careful mothers. They take a pride in presenting their babies clean and in good health on the first day of the week.

The children themselves learn to take the mid-day sleep as a matter of course. I remember one little boy—he was three years old—stumbling into the Camp one Monday morning, lying flat down on the shelter floor, and falling immediately into a deep sleep. He was picked up, rolled in his blanket and put to bed, and there he slept until dinner-time. We who knew his home conditions were not surprised. Father, mother and six children slept in one little low-ceilinged room.

One Saturday morning we were eating our twelve o'clock lunch in the open-air dining-room, which looks out on the garden. The Camp door stood open, and we suddenly espied a small Toddler trotting down the path in a purposeful fashion. Straight down the garden she trotted, merely pausing to pass the time of day with Bagheera, the Camp cat, who paused in her washing operations, scandalised at the intrusion on a Saturday morning. Our Toddler made for the little grass plot under the mulberry tree, and, having taken her bearings, curled herself

up in a little ball and fell fast asleep. She only lived next door as it happened, so having seen that she was warm and comfortable we left her to have her sleep out.

Sometimes when students come to us to train they feel that they will dislike the "sleeping shift"—that it will be dull work. Not at all! The experienced Nursery School Teacher gets to know her charges very well at "sleeping time." She learns a great deal about the treatment the children receive at home—about their only half-realised fears. She is on very intimate terms with her babies when they are dropping off to sleep.

All teachers are not successful with the sleeping shift. It is not easy until regular habits are formed to induce fifty children to go to sleep in the middle of the day—even if they are tired. The noisy teacher who runs about distractedly crying "Hush!" is of no use at all; the fussy teacher is of no use; the teacher who alternately threatens and cajoles is worse than useless.

It is quite an art, this management of the sleeping shift, and some otherwise good teachers are not successful. I cannot explain it. I only know that the teachers who are successful have usually strong and restful personalities. They *know* that this need must be met.

Oh, listen! Bells of dreamland are ringing soft and low!  
What a pleasant, pleasant country it is to which we go,  
And little nodding travellers are seen in every spot,  
All riding off to dreamland—trot—trot—trot.

## CHAPTER VI

### A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A TODDLER

A dreary place would this earth be  
Were there no little people in it;  
The song of life would lose its mirth  
Were there no children to begin it.

WHITTIER.

KITTY Ivy is "two years old and a bit." She is a small stout personage, very determined, one might almost say pugilistic, by nature.

One glorious morning in October a jolly young student coming on duty at a quarter-past eight "pick-a-backs" Kitty Ivy, and races round the garden with her for the sheer joy of being alive. Daisy, the kid, tethered beneath the mulberry tree, sniffs the air, tosses her horns, and leaps sideways three times to show her appreciation of the weather. Algernon, our one and only cock, struts round his domain. He tries to look dignified, as in the happy days before his tail feathers played him false, but alas! it takes fine feathers to make fine birds, and his wives will have none of it. They cluck derisively.

"Good-bye, Kitty Ivy!" cries jolly Elna, and she pops the Toddler over the rails into the Open-Air Shelter. The Toddlers' Shelter is a long, low building. One of the gas-fires is alight, and in the red glow the room looks cheerful and inviting. Gaily-coloured overalls, fresh from the wash-tub, are hanging over the high guards ready for use, and from the adjoining bathroom comes a cheerful hum of voices. "Good-morning, Kitty Ivy," says

the Head of the Department, lifting that small person up to sit on the table and looking at her very carefully. She examines head, eyes, ears and skin, while Kitty Ivy chats away to her. Cheerful voices in the bathroom chant:

'Twas on a Sunday morning that I beheld my darling,  
She looked so sweet and charming in every kind of way,  
She looked so sweet and charming—O—

"'Tarnin' O— Want a barf," says Kitty Ivy, wriggling off the table.

"Away then, Kitty Ivy!" and the mite dances into the bathroom.

Kitty Ivy wears many clothes. The student who picks her up protesting and proceeds to divest her of her garments is sadly aware of the fact. First a thick red stuff petticoat, then a grey knitted one, then a flannelette one, then a queer stiff thing that wraps Kitty's little body round and round many times. "Me stays!" says Kitty proudly. "And I've got Vi'let May's shift on, and Vi'let May's got Mummie's."

Kitty Ivy loves the water. She tries to turn on the tap when Nurse is not looking. She loves the thrill of pulling out the plug and putting her small pink toe into the cavity. She loves to play with the soap bubbles, and she loves it most of all when Jemina, the celluloid duck, swims proudly across the soapy torrent.

The trend of the song is now, "Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub!" Kitty Ivy is standing on a table, her little body all aglow as her "Nursie" rubs her down with a warm towel. The bathroom is now full. Small boys and girls are in various stages of undressing, dressing, bathing and brushing "teef."

Kitty Ivy has washed her own teeth with much spluttering, and "Nursie" has cut her nails and

brushed her scanty locks. Her multitudinous petticoats swathe her once more.

The grey-eyed student surveys Kitty Ivy seriously as she holds up a blue overall embroidered with brown. "Will you have this one, Kitty Ivy?" she asks.

"No!" says that young person decidedly. "Want red 'un."

So the red overall is popped over Kitty Ivy's determined head.

"Ribbing!" demands Kitty Ivy.

The grave young student regards her scanty locks with dismay.

"Kitty Ivy shall have her hair brushed like the boys," she says soothingly.

"Ribbing! Ribbing! Ribbing!" wails Kitty Ivy *crescendo*. "Kitty Ivy does have ribbing tie."

It is a difficult task, but Kitty's nurse is a persevering young person. Kitty Ivy sits very still, lips tightly pressed, eyes rather threatening. Nursie, red with excitement, manages to collect a tuft of hair and secure it triumphantly with a large red ribbon bow.

"Brekfus," says Kitty Ivy, and off she trots to the shelter. Numbers of little folk, with eager, expectant faces, are struggling with diminutive arm-chairs. Each Toddler insinuates his small person into the chair, and then with or without help of "Nursie" the chair is pushed under the table.

A steaming bowl of porridge stands on a side table.

"Hide fingers!" Restless little fingers are tucked away while Nursie says grace. One or two adventurous spirits, such as Kitty Ivy, join in the singing, but most of the wee ones fix their gaze alternately on "Nursie" and the porridge.

"Fold hands!" All eyes are closed while the Toddlers say slowly, "God bless our good brekfus."

"Monitors!"

Alfie the Pickle, poor wee Alice, whose legs are crooked with rickets, Kitty Ivy the Irrepressible, and sturdy bonny Georgie trot out to "Nursie." Their duty is to carry the porridge plates one by one to the hungry Toddlers who await them. Little fat hands grip the plates firmly as, lips tightly shut, the "monitors" perform these tasks. Soon the Toddlers are busy with the meal.

Only Jimmy is unhappy. Since he left his mother an hour ago he has not ceased to wail. Jimmy is pale and puffy. His eyes are red-rimmed and his whole expression blank and stupid; his mouth is open and his nose stuffed. He suffers all the time, for every breath is drawn with difficulty. He cannot taste or smell, and his poor discharging ears pain him. Many Jimmies come to our Nursery.

"'E's a little devil," says Kitty Ivy, pointing reprovingly at him with her spoon. Kitty Ivy's language is not always choice, and the constant wailing gets on her nerves.

Breakfast is over, and off the Toddlers trot to the garden. Three or four, led by Kitty Ivy, run to the "little path." A dear little path it is, cut out in the midst of a flower-bed. You must climb four steps to reach it.

"One, two, four, five," pants Kitty Ivy. Arithmetic is not her strong point, but she loves the adventure of the "little path." She trots along it and down the four steps at the end. Behind her runs Georgie. . "One, two, three, four. Catch me, Nursie," Georgie calls, and jumps the four steps. Georgie is Kitty Ivy's hero. She watches him, admiring.

Against the high wall at the bottom of the garden ribstalls are fixed. Kitty Ivy, running off new fields to conquer, halts before them. Eyes shining,

lips tightly closed, she climbs the ribstalls, followed by Georgie.

The bunnies must then be visited. Kitty Ivy offers Father Bunny mulberry leaves, but though he stands up on his hind legs and sniffs them he politely declines to taste. Happily at this moment out comes Cook with the chickens' breakfast. Eager Toddlers soon surround her, catching at her skirts and crowding round the hen-house door. Algernon and his wives come clucking up as the steaming "hot mash" is poured into their dish. Kitty Ivy is sorry for them. "Too 'ot! Take it yound the sides," she advises Algernon, as he splutters and fusses.

It is now nearly ten o'clock, and our Toddlers trot back to their shelters. On the long wooden tables are set out inset boards, lacing and buttoning frames, and sorting boxes. A rug is spread on the floor, and one of Kitty's nurses is seated on it, holding up a coloured bag of inviting appearance. The Toddlers may go where they will. Kitty Ivy chooses the rug, and soon the Toddlers have settled down to work. But Jimmy stands in the doorway and wails. A kindly student picks him up and tries to comfort him.

"Take him to the Clinic," says Miss Atkins. "Nurse will attend to his ears and he will see the doctor later about the adenoids. Wait until we have had handkerchief drill!"

This performance is undertaken solemnly and thoroughly. Soft medicated paper is given out, and the Toddlers are shown how to use it scientifically. Handkerchief drill is carried out many times during the day.

Kitty Ivy is now able to give her attention to the "Wonder Bag." Delightful things come from this hiding-place.

"What is this?" asks the Nurse Teacher.

"A ball!" cries Tommy, holding out eager hands. The teacher holds up the brightly-coloured ball whilst the children talk about it. They speak of the colours and the pictures on it. They roll it and bounce it and throw it. Then they try to catch it. More wonders come out of that bag, and Kitty Ivy learns many new words and handles many objects.

After a while she goes off to the table. A board of insets attracts her. "Quares!" she says, and she takes the solid wooden squares out of their corresponding holes and places them on the table. Tommy is sitting beside her and is also working with insets. But he is a new-comer, and he blindly seizes the insets and tries to force them into holes that are too small. Kitty Ivy's method is a different one. As she takes up each square she looks at it carefully and compares it with the holes. Sometimes she runs her little forefinger round the edge. After careful comparison she fits her square into its hole. She makes no mistakes.

Soon she turns away from the board and takes up a lacing frame. An eager young teacher, new to the work, offers help.

"Want to do it mine self!" says Kitty Ivy, pushing her aside. A few minutes later, "I done it!" she announces triumphantly. And the young student looks on in respectful admiration.

Dinner-time. All the Toddlers must be washed, whilst the cloths are laid and tables made ready.

"Fiss!" says Kitty Ivy, sniffing appreciatively and beating on the table with her spoon. Then she remembers her manners and lays down her spoon beside her plate. She is a "monitor."

The first course consists of fish and potatoes beaten into a cream with butter and milk; the second course is suet pudding served with treacle.

By the time dinner is over more than one Toddler

is nodding. Little camp-beds await them, and cosy rugs. Each little person, divested of boots, is rolled up snugly and popped in bed. The Sandman claims the Toddlers one by one.

Kitty Ivy is wakeful to-day. Her nurse sits down beside her and smoothes her hair. "Tommy is sleeping!" she says softly. "Poppy is sleeping! Georgie is sleeping! Kitty Ivy—is—sleeping—too!"

The Sandman has completed his round.

About half-past two in the afternoon Kitty Ivy opens sleepy blue eyes once more. The Nursery presents a busy scene, for half the babies are now awake. Some are trotting about and some are in the bathroom. The Nurse Teachers move in and out amongst the children, folding blankets and moving beds. Georgie is curled up in a ball, fast asleep. Jimmy lies on his side breathing heavily—with flushed face. He makes little distressed movements now and again. Tommy is sitting on the floor lacing his boots, and little Violet has rolled up her blanket and is nursing it like a doll.

Kitty Ivy jumps up. She puts on her own shoes, and trots off happily to the bathroom to be "tidied" for the afternoon. Clara and Kennerly, the pet canaries, are singing a song of thankfulness for the Indian summer. Bagheera, the Camp cat, sits on the rail of the shelter washing her face with commendable thoroughness.

Kitty Ivy is off. Red ribbon bow bobbing, she trots round the garden with Tommy, visiting all the pets in turn.

Back again to the shelter. Kitty's favourite nurse welcomes her, holding up a large, brightly-coloured picture.

"Jack and Jill went up the hill," cries Kitty Ivy, clapping her hands and dancing with delight as she

recognises it. Soon she and six of the other little people are clustering round "Nursie," listening to the adventures of Jack and nodding their heads in solemn approval of the punishment that befell the spiteful Jill. They chatter about the green grass, the pail, Jill's blue overall and Jack's cap, to their hearts' content.

The musical - box is now at work, inquiring anxiously whether we are acquainted with the Muffin Man. Tea-time draws near. Plates of bread-and-butter spread with jam are placed upon the tables, and the Toddlers get ready for the last meal of the day.

Evening is drawing on and the fires are lighted. The shelter looks cosy and inviting. Bread, jam and milk soon disappear "down the red lane" and the Toddlers draw their chairs in semicircles round the red glow of the fire.

One group of the delighted children is watching a humming-top spinning and whirling on its way; more Toddlers are gathered round the Head of the Department, who is singing nursery rhymes and telling stories. Kitty Ivy is with the second group.

About the railings, little groups of mothers are gathering now, and one by one the children trot away, waving their hands in farewell.

"Kitty *I'vee!*!" Our Kitty runs across the shelter and flings herself into the arms held out in greeting. Then back she runs: "Good-bye, Nursie! Good-bye, Georgie!" Kitty Ivy makes her little round of farewells while "Mummie" chats awhile by the fire.

Kitty's mother is dreadfully tired. She has been out all day charing. She is thankful to have the work, for her husband is dying of consumption and she has many mouths to feed besides Kitty Ivy's little red one. This is the happiest moment of the day for her. She cuddles Kitty Ivy beneath her

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thin shawl, and her face is very tender. With a cheery "Good-night, Nurse," she sets off on her homeward way.

And some are in the palace  
On white and downy beds,  
And some are in the hovel  
With a clout beneath their head  
And some are on the cold hard earth,  
Whose mothers have no bread.

LAWRENCE ALMA-TADEMA.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE THREE- AND FOUR-YEAR-OLDS

Give me no mansions ivory white,  
Nor palaces of pearl and gold;  
Give me a child for all delight  
Just four years old.

KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON.

WHAT a remarkably active, energetic little person is the healthy, happy three-year-old! All through the hours of his waking day he must be *doing*, experimenting, investigating, dramatising. Occupy him fully all the time, and like the little girl with the curl, he will be "very good indeed"; expect him to sit still and do nothing, and he too can be "horrid."

The three-year-old is a very different problem from the Toddler. The Toddler *will* occasionally sit still and gaze around him with interest—not so his elder brother! The Nurse Teacher in the Toddlers' Shelters sometimes settles her little charges at the tables five minutes before dinner is served, and the babies will sit demurely waiting the arrival of the meal, beating their fists upon the table to the refrain of "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep." Once upon a time, when we were short of helpers, we tried this plan with the threes and fours, but the results were so dire that the experiment has never been repeated!

The Nurse Teachers in this department require infinite patience. "Hands off" must be their motto, and they must learn to watch and wait while

Tommy does up his shoes, Rosie struggles with her overall, and Billy helps himself to pudding. These restless, eager little hands of the three-year-olds are hungry for new experiences.

There is always plenty to do in an Open-Air Nursery School. First there is the morning bath. Every healthy three-year-old loves water. He loves to turn on the taps, to play boats, to blow bubbles, and to splash in all available puddles.

"Lor, Nurse, our Flossie was always a oner for wa'er," says a mother, "but since she came to Camp she's a reg'lar *sponge*, she is. I can't do nothink with 'er." Each little three- and four-year-old attempts his own ablutions—of course under careful supervision. He cleans his own teeth and washes his own face and hands. He also lays the table for meals, helps himself to pudding and potatoes, and puts out the blankets and beds.

A great deal of apparatus must be devised to keep him occupied—on wet days especially—and this apparatus must be big, for it is the large muscles which need exercise. He does not want to handle small boxes and pick up tiny objects at this stage of his development. He must learn to recognise differences and resemblances, and to this end many exercises in sorting and matching must be devised. Amongst Miss McMillan's apparatus for children of this age we have had provided for us asbestos letter boards. The letters which fit into the boards are coloured red and blue, and our little ones love the exercise of taking them out and fitting them into their proper places. There are similar boards for teaching colours, and these, too, are a great joy. Then we encourage our children to sort shells, seeds, coloured sticks and letters, into groups.

Out in the garden there is the herb bed to explore,

the pigeons and chickens to watch, the goat to fondle, the hedgehog to gaze upon with awe. When one sees these active little creatures trotting up and down the garden paths in the sunshine, learning in Nature's own way, one realises the cruelty of keeping them penned up in the classroom.

One day last week Ronnie, who is not very steady on his legs as yet, fell down in the garden. Rosie, aged three and a half, was sorry for him and helped him up tenderly. "Don't cry, darling," she said, "Rosie'll kiss it better." Ronnie was comforted and toddled off. Rosie stood watching him thoughtfully. Then she ran up behind him and deliberately knocked him over; immediately afterwards she fussed and fondled him, evidently thoroughly enjoying the experience of acting the part of chief comforter and friend.

Our little Deptford children, like all children from poor areas, are slow to speak. They make use of gestures whenever possible, and the language they sometimes use when they first come to the Nursery School is deplorable. A mother brought her little four-year-old to the Camp one morning last winter. She had a pathetic story to tell of an invalid husband—of work long sought and now found. "But there's our Peter, Nurse," she said, "Drat 'im! What am I to do with the little varmint?" She hugged the varmint fondly.

Peter was a quaint wee figure. Clad in a bright green jersey, with a scarlet muffler round his neck, he stood confessed with his hands tucked firmly into a black plush muff. "I 'ad that there muff orf a barrer," said Peter's mother proudly. "'E 'oller'd till I give it 'im, the little faggot."

The Nursery School was full—quite full! But when Peter looked up, with his glorious blue eyes fringed with the thickest of black lashes, and when

we saw the anxious pucker on his mother's brow which told of her anxiety and pressing need, we said weakly, "Come. We'll see if we can find room for Peter."

The Head of the Department welcomed Peter warmly and fell in love with him at first sight. We christened him "Angel Face" and introduced him at once to the new red engine. He played happily for some time, firmly refusing to be parted from the scarlet comforter or the velvet muff. Suddenly he noticed that his mother had left him. "Lemme go 'ome," he cried out, fist in one eye, muff in the other. "I live in the 'Igh Street, Deptford, you silly fool, and I wanner go 'ome." Alas! Not one of us could pacify "the little varmint." He wept aloud and refused to be comforted until the advent of dinner. Replete with fish and treacle pudding, he ceased wailing for a time. But when the beds were set out for the afternoon nap Peter wailed once more.

Miss Hurn, her charges safe in bed, took Peter on her knee. She tried him with pictures, puzzles and beads. 'Twas vain; Peter would not take his hands out of his muff, and he failed to show the slightest interest in her proceedings.

At last she took the chalk and began to draw on the board, talking quietly the while.

"What's that?" demanded Peter.

"That's a boat."

"Who's that in it?"

"That's you, Peter."

"Me, is it? Oh, my Gawd," said puzzled Peter.  
"Where are me —— legs?"

The teacher explained that his legs were not to be seen because they were *inside* the boat. She illustrated her point with a doll and a toy boat. Peter was interested. He ran up to a student, who

was passing through the Department, and tugged at her apron.

"That's a boat," he told her. "That's me in it. You can't see me — legs. *She* says not. But they're inside. *She* says so. Gimme some more pudden."

Terribly ugly words soil the lips of our children at times, and terribly sordid pictures of illness and death are painted for them by the folks at home.

Nannie came to us last January. She was brought by her sister, a child of twelve—"Please, Miss Davies, Daddy's wrote 'er name down, and please Muvver's dead—she died last week, and please will you take Nannie in, because there ain't no one to see to 'er, Daddy says." A few questions drew the sad facts from the girl. Mother had just died, leaving ten children, of whom Alice Mary was the eldest and Nannie the youngest but one. Father was going to try to get Nannie and Baby into a Home.

"Our Alice Mary, come you 'ome," came a strident voice from the gate. "All the washin'-up's awaitin' for yer, and yer won't 'arf ketch it!"

Off trundled poor down-at-heels Alice Mary, and we took Nannie into the shelter. She did not look quite normal, certainly. Her thumb was firmly tucked into her mouth and her head was on one side. She was indescribably dirty. She said never a word while we washed her, but when at last she was seated by the fire hugging a doll: "My Mummie's in a big 'ole," she chanted. "My Mummie's in 'ospital. My Mummie's in a big dark 'ole, and she won't never come out any more. They've put my Mummie in a box in a big dark 'ole."

Dorcas Elizabeth, the curly-headed pet of the Department, stood staring. Suddenly Nannie took her thumb out of her mouth.

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"*Your* Mummie's in a dark 'ole," she said, pointing. Dorcas Elizabeth gasped.

"She isn't," she replied, curtly and decisively.

"She is—and she can't come out!"

Dorcas Elizabeth drew herself up and replied stoutly:

"My Mummie'll come out of the dark 'ole to me, anyway. But she's scrubbing the kitchen floor, and she" (here Dorcas forgot her English) "*ain't in one.*" With that she turned her back on the little heathen. But poor little Nannie could not forget that awful picture. She lost her ball one day. "Is it in a dark 'ole, Nursie?" she asked. "Won't it never come out?"

One of the most important tasks of the Nursery School Teacher is to make the speech good, not only from an oral but from a hygienic point of view. The results are far-reaching. No handkerchief drill, no operations for adenoids are really effective unless they are followed up by good functioning.

The lethargy of the speaking organs is very noticeable in the slum child. He is not called upon to use the natural organs of speech in anything like a vigorous way. When he first comes to the Nursery School he declines even to say "yes" and "no"; he prefers to answer by a nod or shake of the head.

The slum child has very little use for his nose in speaking. It is commonly said that when he has a cold he speaks through his nose—as a matter of fact, when he has a cold he cannot speak through his nose. The child who lives in a poor area often suffers from chronic cold. He cannot say "n" or "ng." His mouth is used merely as an orifice and the lips have very little function. The child does not utter his explosives (p, b, etc.) well. These sounds require energy. The tongue shares the

lethargy of the lips and the organs—he cannot say “r” and “l.” The aspirate is avoided or put in the wrong place, and to complete matters the gutturals are often left out altogether.

The work of getting clear, good, hygienic speech from the children is of the utmost importance. Besides the requisite attention which must be given to the speech organs, it is important that the children should have something to say and should want to say it. For this reason we see that they have the opportunity of making first-hand acquaintance with all kinds of interesting objects. They love the wonder bag—a pretty coloured bag filled with curious things. Perhaps it is the “P” bag, designed to make the little folk work hard at that troublesome explosive. Inside we shall find, amongst other things, a pen, a pencil, a potato, a pan, a pocket knife. The children are required to say the words carefully and clearly whilst they handle the objects.

They find the animals, too, so wonderfully interesting that they want to know all about them, and they chatter happily as they fondle the goat or watch the pigeons feeding out of Nurse’s hand. The beautiful, brightly-coloured flowers; the gay ribbons and overalls—all these things stimulate them and make them want to talk.

We have also to face the problem of making children listen. The loud noises they hear in babyhood have stunned them. They themselves speak in rasping, hoarse voices. They have to be taught to listen to soft sweet sounds and to speak in low voices. This is one of the most difficult tasks of the Nursery School Teacher, but it is of the utmost importance in the development of the child.

When we have played and laughed, sung and talked with our little ones in the Nursery School

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Garden, we can appreciate the music of Tagore's words:

When I bring you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colour on clouds, on water, and why flowers are painted in tints—when I give coloured toys to you, my child.

When I sing to make you dance I truly know why there is music in leaves and why waves send their chorus of voices to the heart of the listening earth—when I sing to make you dance.

When I bring sweet things to your greedy hands I know why there is honey in the cup of the flowers and why fruits are filled secretly with sweet juice—when I bring sweet things to your greedy hands.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SEVEN-YEAR-OLDS

THE age of seven is always a landmark in the life of a human being. To ignore stopping-places in education is to write without punctuation, and so to miss the meaning of the developing life. It is therefore of the greatest importance that we should learn to understand the seven-year-old.

Let us take, then, our seven-year-old to-day. He is, of course, a mixed product, and reflects not only the new advantages of the Nursery School life, but some of his home disadvantages as well. Nothing can as yet be taken for granted in this home life.

If home conditions allow, he washes himself thoroughly in the morning before he comes to school; if it is not possible for him to do this he runs straight to the bathroom on his arrival, throws off his coat, rolls up his sleeves and scrubs himself lustily. Teeth and hair brushed, nails and ears beyond reproach, he takes his share in the preparations for breakfast. Perhaps it is his turn to carry the steaming porridge from the kitchen; perhaps he is the "monitor" appointed to lay the table for breakfast. Our "big children" in the "top school" are a very pretty sight in the early morning, seated round their gay tables with their "shining morning faces" glowing with health and contentment. At each table a "father" or a "mother" presides, and it is the duty of these important individuals to serve the porridge and to preserve the decorum of the breakfast-table.

The children want to talk, and they have a great deal to say to one another.

"Seems to me Thor's about to-day," remarked one little chap on a stormy morning recently—and great was the annoyance of the whole class a while ago when Frigga freely besprinkled Derbyshire and the North with feathers, but entirely refrained from shaking her bed over Deptford.

One good illustration of double life in school and home appears in language training. The children at this stage become keenly interested in their own speech, in the speech of others, and in derivations. They are anxious to remedy their own speech defects, and good-naturedly ready to criticise and help one another.

"You'll never be able to take a good part in the play, you know," said one small maiden scornfully to another. "*You* still drop your aitches!" The snubbed one sniffed woefully.

"Well, you—you—can't do sums, anyway," was all the retort she could think of at the moment. But she made valiant efforts forthwith to conquer the troublesome aspirate.

"Lor, Miss," said one of the mothers the other day, "whatever has got our Katie? She was a-carryin' on somethink orful in the yard the other day, and when 'er Daddy told 'er to 'old 'er noise she says as perky as you please that she is a-practisin' gutturals for Miss McMillan."

Our seven-year-olds play with words as a cat plays with a mouse.

"It's a lugubrious day," remarks George one rainy morning in November, as he hangs up his dripping coat.

"These flowers are passing sweet," quotes Elsie, sniffing them appreciatively as she arranges them in the best blue vase.

The children's mind-store is of a rather strange character. Much of it is sombre, if not gruesome.

They are all well versed in the mysteries of life and death. Many of them have seen death, and all of them have suffered. The experiences through which they have passed have, in some cases, made them wonderfully sympathetic.

"I couldn't do my sums last night," says John. "Mummie was washing and Grannie was in the parlour. Mummie said she would let Grannie lie in the parlour till the funeral was over, because it was the best room and Grannie liked it when she was alive."

"We don't like 'born' babies at our house," remarks Grace sadly. "They make Daddy angry and they make Mummie cry. Besides, there isn't any more room for them in the big bed."

"My Mummie's gone to hospital and Daddy says if she dies *he* doesn't know who's to pay for the funeral," says Harry, coming to school one morning in tears.

"You can get buried for eight-pound-ten," George, uncanny in his wisdom, informs him. "But why wasn't your mother insured, anyway?"

No one is more keenly interested than the slum child in watching the opening of the flowers, the budding of the trees. He loves his own garden, in which he works with a will, and he watches with delight the manœuvres of ants, spiders and bees.

Bearing all this in mind, let us now turn to the larger question of education proper. Let us make a retrospect and see what has been done or what should have been done for him by the Nursery School.

To begin with he is in good health and, what is almost more important, he has the desire to realise and to express the growing life within him. There

is a great literature on play. Into what does play evolve? Into primitive art, and we must not delay the child's entrance into this world of romance.

His first and greatest impulse is of course towards the primitive arts. Every pulse and every heart-throb, every movement of the life stream in his veins urges him to find the extension of this rhythmic life. That is why his feet cannot keep still when he hears the barrel-organ—that is why he loves gesture. The whole battle of life is largely the effort for the extension of consciousness. And these rhythmic movements which he so readily practises under the right influences deepen the organic consciousness and finally raise the half-submerged creature out of the lethargy of early childhood. Considered from this standpoint, Art is of course Hygiene in its higher development; Hygiene which wins, however, not merely health but new consciousness and new power. The awful cloak of superstition which drugged the intelligence of mankind in the Middle Ages and in past Reformation time has obscured the real meaning of Art, and has led us far away from the condition of the glorious Singers of Israel, who "made a joyful noise unto the Lord" in worshipping, who heard the hills clap their hands, and who danced before the Ark with all their might. Something of all this enhancement of life must be recaptured by our children.

The first initiation must be in large movements that engage the whole body. Through these he must deepen his feeling not only for rhythm but for melody, and this brings into action all the nerves as well as the muscles and gives him his first feeling of the meaning of music.

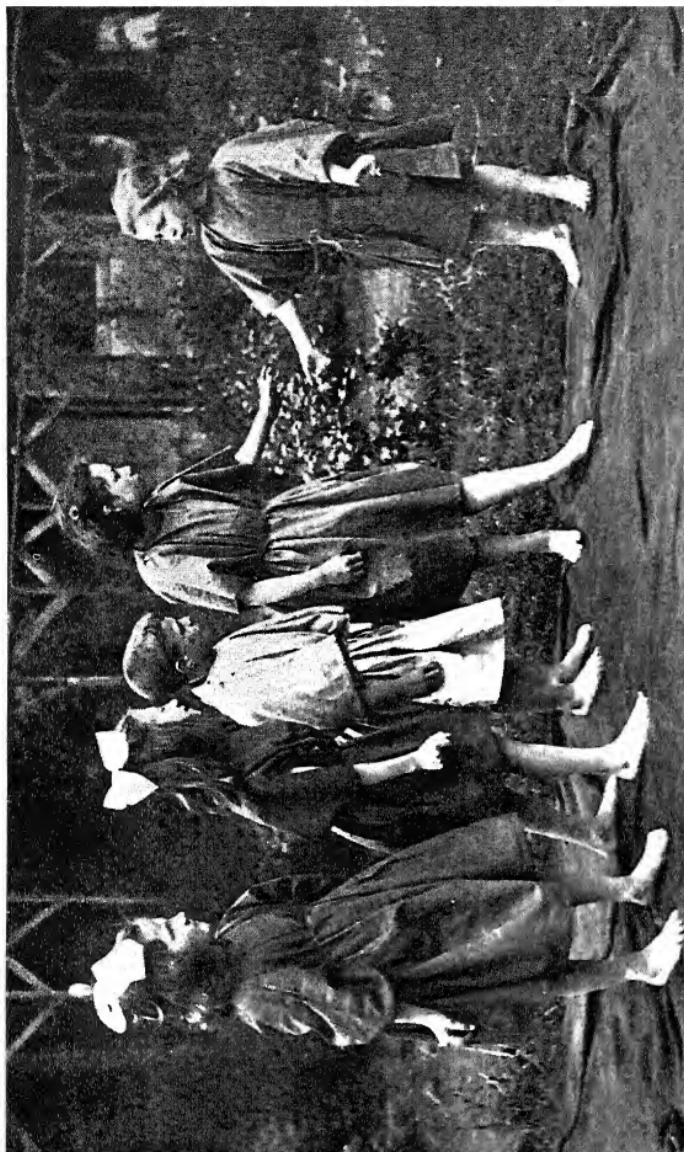
Music is in all the greater things. "Go deep enough," says Carlyle, "and you will find music everywhere." A child should be allowed, even a



*By courtesy of Photo Press*

**"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"**

**THE MECHANICALS**



this early stage, to take part in the deep and wonderful things by learning the primitive art of singing and dancing.

These arts are much nearer to the child than even the plastic arts. He is prepared for them so early in life that we can hardly trace the moment when the music centres are developed and the capacity for appreciation of rhythm and melody is born. These facts are now widely appreciated, as our many forms of eurhythmics show. There is also the art of eurhythmy, which aspires to make the whole body interpret the meaning of language and of spiritual consciousness. Prepared by these arts the child reaches the climax of play in dramatic art, and we have ample evidence to show that, allowed to enter by this door, he finds, even at the age of seven or eight, the meaning of some of the highest poems and psalms as well as the lyrics.

Dramatic art, like play, opens the door to all the arts. It is therefore the best medium of expression for the child, and it encourages him to put forth his whole power without strain.

Here is a picture of the children acting the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is not claimed that they are exceptionally beautiful or exceptionally clever, but it is claimed that the great miracles of life are illustrated in these children. These lips express the fact that they have been opened—these arms and hands, and especially these fingers, show that the life currents are well aflow. The little figure which holds all the rest like a magnet is not necessarily more developed than they. All have the power to attract and attend, and all have plainly awokened from the lethargy which is death. To continue their education will be a glorious task, for the children will be keen allies of the teacher. They now want to learn.

"Our Top Class" at the Rachel McMillan Nursery School have a little room of their own. Here they store their books, models and other cherished possessions, and here they sit on a winter evening after tea. Their ages vary from seven to nine years.

They are very quiet to-night. Bertie and Lily have taken books from the "library" shelves. They are lost to the world. Bertie is reading *Oliver Twist*, and Lily *Gulliver's Travels*. Gladys and Cissie are sketching. Rosie is very busy coaching Amy in her part in the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Amy has only recently had the honour of joining "The Top Class," and her speech is a little halting still. Rosie is very much in earnest, for Amy must not be allowed to disgrace them.

Ruby and Edna are busy with their needles. "We're making jumpers," Edna explains. "They are to wear on our holiday, when we go to the Avery Hill. Mine's green and Ruby's is blue."

"I'm making the table for the anchorite's cell," volunteers George. "It's rather shaky about the legs—but I don't think that matters very much. He wouldn't fuss about a thing like that, would he? He'd be too busy praying."

"And I am writing a play," says Dorothy, opening wide her deep blue eyes. "It's all my very own. It's about the Page who wanted to be a Knight. Miss Campbell told us about him. Perhaps, if it is good enough, we shall act it some day."

## PART II

### CHAPTER IX

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE RACHEL McMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL

I desire to live worthily all my days, so that after death I may leave behind me a record of good work done.

KING ALFRED.

If we wish to trace the development of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School we must go back to the year 1908, when the first London School Clinic was opened by the Misses McMillan in the upper room of a County Council Elementary School at Bow.

If we acknowledged to the full our responsibility for the children of the slums—if we really felt that they were our own flesh and blood—what should we do for them first? Should we leave them to run in the streets, and then send them, with their sore eyes and running ears, to swell the mighty classes in the elementary schools? I think not. I am quite sure we should attend first to their bodily needs.

The Misses McMillan are educationists first and foremost. But they did not propose to train the minds of these children until they had healed their bodies. Miss Margaret McMillan's experience on the School Board at Bradford had shown her the terrible amount of preventable suffering among school children, and she had worked hard to obtain medical inspection for them.

The clauses making medical inspection compulsory appeared for the first time in the Bill of

1907. They included the creation of a Medical Board at Whitehall, and there is now placed upon us the great responsibility of knowing the real condition of the children of this country. The extent of the evil can be gathered from Sir George Newman's report. The agencies which have been created to deal with it are as yet in their infancy, but the earliest and most developed is the School Clinic.

The first London Clinic was removed from Bow to Deptford early in 1910. There are eight hundred of these centres throughout the country. Children receive treatment in these Clinics for the three great classes of disease—teeth, eye, ear and throat troubles, and minor ailments generally. It should be noted here that though the Clinics were intended primarily for children of school age, from the very first the Misses McMillan received little ones under five years of age at the Deptford Health Centre.

Miss Margaret McMillan writes at length on "School Clinics" in the *Camp School*.<sup>1</sup> She tells of the good work they have done—how "thousands have been saved from early and chronic ill-health through their help." But she also shows us that, though the Clinic has cured thousands, a very great deal of time and money is wasted in alleviating diseases which are preventable and should be stamped out. She tells how in the last three months of 1913 the Deptford Nurse treated nine hundred and fifty cases of skin diseases, and how within the same period nine hundred and twenty-seven of these returned after being cured to have the same kind of disease treated by drug and lotion.

The diseases of the slums will never be stamped out until the housing conditions are improved, and until England grants education and nurture to all

<sup>1</sup> *The Camp School*. Published by George Allen and Unwin.

her children. The children of the poor, as well as the children of the well-to-do, need sunlight and freedom for development. They must be educated in healthy surroundings. Those diseases which are preventable should never attack them.

This was felt very strongly. So a small Nursery School and Baby Camp was opened in the garden of Evelyn House, Deptford.

This house was given free of rent by Mr. and Mrs. John Evelyn in the year 1911. The garden was also used as a Night Camp for girls over eight years of age.

In 1913 the London County Council was approached with regard to the vacant plot of land known as the Stowage Site. This site was designed at the time for a new elementary school, but permission was granted to the Misses McMillan to erect a shelter here and continue their experiment. On a very stormy day in March 1914 the little school was moved to its new quarters. It soon numbered thirty children, and all through the summer of 1914 the little ones lived and slept in the open air. It was a Night as well as a Day Camp.

Miss McMillan gives us the record of the first eighty-seven children who entered the Camp—the eldest of these children was five, and the youngest three months old. Nearly every one of the eighty-seven suffered from debility; twenty-two had two distinct ailments, nine had three. Nine out of the eighty-seven were normal. Yet all these children were supposed to be well.

The progress made by the children was wonderful. This is shown by the following quotation from Dr. Eder's report on the summer of 1914 (Dr. Eder was Senior Medical Officer of the Deptford School Clinic):

*Baby Camp.* This was started in Church Street in the spring (10th March) with six children under school age; by the end

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of the summer twenty-nine children were living and sleeping in the Camp. There was hardly any illness even during the hot months; the children put on weight regularly. Their sleep is reported to have been most quiet: in every way they enjoyed the open space, which was large for these tiny ones. There seems to have been marked mental improvement as well as physical during the past five months up to 10th August.

These children had all their meals in school; they now have dinner. This interesting experiment has been remarkably successful and has exceeded any anticipation of our own. It is one that is capable of great development, and production of good to the rising generation. It has been generally recognised that the proper care of children under school age forms a serious gap in the measures that have been suggested or ought to be put in practice during recent years to ensure a healthier or more vigorous people. The open-air camp for these babies is an endeavour to bridge the gap, and it is a method of treatment and child nurture that might be well encouraged and developed.

(Signed)      DUDLEY BURNEY.  
                  { M. D. EDER.

The Nursery was at this time entirely voluntary, and had not as yet many friends, while the site could have been claimed by the London County Council at any time for its original purpose.

In August 1914 came the outbreak of the Great War. The Ministry of Munitions was anxious to secure the work of married women in the munition factories. The Misses McMillan appealed to the Ministry of Munitions through the Board of Education, with the result that a grant of sevenpence a day was promised for every child of a munition worker. In spite of this help the school was carried on under great difficulties. The staff consisted at first of teachers, later on, when young babies were admitted, it was found necessary to engage nurses. Most of the good nurses of England were engaged in war work at home or abroad, and the difficulty of procuring a good staff in such a neighbourhood, and with such poor equipment as was then possible,

was very great. The situation was saved by the heroism of Miss Rachel McMillan. She bathed and tended the babies herself when skilled help could not be obtained, and it was her loving hands which lent refinement to the poor equipment. All the ailing babies, we are told, held out their little arms to "Miss Rachel"—and she instinctively knew which of her little ones needed her most.

Early in the year 1917 the strain proved too much for her, and on her birthday, 25th March, she passed over to the other side. Here she works for us and watches over us still.

Thus star by star declines  
Till all are passed away,  
As morning high and higher shines  
To peace and perfect day  
Nor sink these stars in empty night,  
They hide themselves in Heaven's own light.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RACHEL MCMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL

Educate every child as if he were your own—RACHEL MCMILLAN.

EARLY in the year 1917 the Misses McMillan had won the consent of the Board of Education to the extension of the Nursery School premises, half the cost of which was to be met by the Board. On 3rd August, 1917, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, Minister of Education, proclaimed the new premises open, and the school became the memorial of Miss Rachel McMillan.

Two years later the London County Council entered into an agreement with Miss Margaret McMillan, in virtue of which she was allowed to continue the experiment for five years on condition that she relinquished all claim to the property, including the buildings, in September 1924. The school received the first grant from the London County Council in September 1920.

In the summer of 1921 the Nursery School was full to overflowing. There was an average attendance of one hundred and thirty-five children, and almost daily we were obliged to turn away mothers who were seeking admittance for their children. The school was now recognised by the Board of Education as a Training Centre for certificated teachers, and we were also training private students for the Nursery School work.

Miss McMillan was very anxious to try the

experiment of a large Nursery School. She therefore approached the Council with a view to extending the school, and building an additional shelter to accommodate one hundred more children. In the Memorandum which she presented to the Council Miss McMillan stated that the objects to be attained by the extension of this school were as follow:

1. The testing at last by experiment what the size of these schools should be.
2. The actual knowledge of what they should cost.
3. The testing by experiment of how the staff should be trained.
4. The effect of the Nursery School on the general health and intelligence as shown:

- (a) In the need for attendance at Clinics of Nursery School children.
- (b) In their general health as recorded on their records, weight, attendance and aspect.
- (c) In their progress (mental), particularly in the later years of Nursery School life.

The new building was opened on 5th September, 1921, and the Managing Committee was extended under the chairmanship of Mr. Dence, L.C.C., the present Mayor of Greenwich. The original committee had consisted of Miss Rachel and Miss Margaret McMillan, Mr. and Mrs. John Evelyn, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Coates, and Mr. Joseph Fels.

Miss Margaret McMillan and Mrs. John Evelyn still represent this original committee, the vacant seats of which are taken by Mr. Dent, the well-known publisher, the Rev. Arthur Meek, Superintendent of the Deptford Mission, and Mr. Baker, for many years a resident of the parish. Representing the London County Council are Mr. Dence, the

chairman (Moderate), Mr. Watts (Labour), Miss Nicholson, Mrs. Monk, and Mrs. Wells.

It was decided that the two departments (that is, the original or voluntary school and the new department) were to be run as one school. There was to be one superintendent and one central kitchen, where the cooking and preparation of meals was to take place.

The new department was formally opened on 22nd November, 1921, by Her Majesty the Queen. This was Queen Mary's second visit to the Rachel McMillan Nursery School. She has always shown a keen interest in the development of this work.

The winter of 1921-22 was a difficult one. In December 1921 an epidemic of influenza raged in South-East London, and many young children fell victims to the disease during the Christmas holidays. The attendance on the last day of the Christmas term was one hundred and eighty-four. We came back to a school of one hundred and thirty-one children. It is a fact worthy of record that there were no deaths and no cases of serious illness amongst the children of the voluntary or older-established school. The children's power of resistance had been built up by the good plain food and fresh air they had enjoyed for months, in some cases for years. But two little ones from the new department died during the Christmas holidays. They had not sufficient strength to fight the disease.<sup>1</sup> Outside the Nursery School the children died in great numbers.

In February 1921 there was an epidemic of measles in South-East London. Measles is the one infectious disease we dread in the Nursery School. We have, of course, isolated cases of scar-

<sup>1</sup> In neither case was the death actually due to influenza. It was caused by a second disease contracted whilst the child was suffering from influenza.

let fever, diphtheria, and whooping-cough. These diseases we do not fear, for they do not spread in the open air. Measles is our bugbear. But we have never closed our school for any epidemic, and it was not our intention to do so now. Dr. Margaret Hogarth, under whose medical care we are, and who visits our school weekly, was also averse to closing the school. She advised as follows:

"Feed the children well. Watch most carefully for the first symptoms of the disease. Then isolate at once. Visit the parents and see that, if possible, the child is put to bed at once and kept warm."

The epidemic raged in the neighbourhood. The new department, as was to be expected, suffered first and most severely. The Staff of the Nursery School visited the homes and advised the mothers. The Medical Officers of Deptford and Greenwich were more than kind, and every case was kept under supervision. Dr. Hogarth examined each patient carefully for after effects, and the result was that out of forty-one cases we had only one instance of running ears attributable to the disease—there were no other after effects. Surely this new experience proves that the little ones who came under our care were better off than those who were left to play in the streets.

The new department has steadily progressed in numbers since the Easter of 1922. During the last three months (March to June 1923) there has been an average attendance of two hundred and twelve children under five years of age in the Rachel McMillan Nursery School. The attitude of the parents is very friendly, and they are beginning to take pride in sending their children to school clean and tidy. There is already a long waiting-list. Soon we shall need to build again.

## CHAPTER XI

### OTHER OPEN-AIR NURSERY SCHOOLS

THE Jellicoe Nursery School grew out of the needs of a war club for women. Mrs. Evelegh, the Honorary Treasurer of the Jellicoe Club, Rochford Street, Kentish Town, originated the idea, and it was she who persuaded the committee to annex two rooms in the club house for this purpose. These rooms were simply and artistically decorated, and the cost of furnishing was met largely by the family of the late Mrs. Whitehorse, who was much beloved by the club members, and whose sister, Miss Black, is an active member of the committee of the Jellicoe Nursery School.

This Nursery School was opened in 1916, and Miss Cromarty was appointed its first superintendent. In 1918 the increased number of children rendered a change necessary. The idea of an Open-Air Nursery School appealed to Mrs. Evelegh, who felt strongly the urgent need of the children for sunshine and fresh air, and who had been distressed by the frequent outbreaks of slight epidemics in the school.

An appeal was made to the committee for subscriptions, and the four hundred pounds raised was spent in adapting a cowshed and yard at the back of the club. In 1921, when the need for more accommodation was felt, another schoolroom, staffroom and a cloakroom were adapted from a second shed. The school is now recognised for forty children. It has been in the receipt of a grant since 1918.

The children thoroughly enjoy their open-air life. They run in and out through the wide-open doors from the schoolroom to the quaint little garden with its cobble-stones and gay flower-beds. The utmost freedom compatible with social tolerance is the rule in this school, where the little ones serve their own dinners, brush up and tidy the garden, and make their school beautiful in many ways.

There are three Open-Air Nursery Schools in Bradford: Princeville, Lilycroft, and St. Anne's Roman Catholic Nursery School. St. Anne's is the largest school, and owes its existence to the great zeal of Father Daley.

In 1920 Miss Chignell, the superintendent of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School, went to Bradford at the request of the Education Committee to organise these schools. The two Council schools, Princeville and Lilycroft, are beautiful. The plan of both buildings is on the lines of the Rachel McMillan Nursery School, but money has been spent freely on every detail of the equipment. Opening on the fairly wide rooms there is a covered way, and beyond a large walled garden. The bathrooms are well equipped and arranged, and the whole is on one floor. All questions of diet are successfully solved by the help of the splendid Bradford School Kitchen, which sends the food out to these and other schools. The climate of Bradford does not lend itself to the easy evolution of a beautiful garden, but, in spite of the late spring and early autumn, the school playgrounds are gay and charming places.

The three schools vary in average attendance from thirty to seventy children, and these children bear witness to the value of their surroundings and training. In Bradford, where a single firm employs

over a thousand married women, there can be no doubt as to the need for the Nursery School.

No school has had a more tragic history than the Scottish School in St. Agnes Road, Dundee. And yet perhaps for that reason no other has a future that is more assured. In 1920 Miss Mabel Brydie and Miss Jessie Porter, students at the Rachel McMillan Training Centre, took up the task of developing the new Nursery School, started by a small group of people in Dundee.

The building, for it is not an entirely open-air school, is part of an old poorhouse, but it is set on a beautiful hill with woodland and lawns all around it. Here Miss Brydie began her work for the children of the jute workers. The school is notable for its wonderful success in gaining the friendship and support of the parents.

Miss Brydie died in December 1922, of a disease contracted in the course of her work with the poorest children. The school is now carried on under the direction of Miss Porter.

Amongst the schools which are more or less open-air, in that they have a large garden attached to them, is the George Dent Nursery School at Darlington. All the arrangements of this school have a subtle distinction and beauty, which owes its existence probably to the fact that it is a memorial school, founded in memory of a pioneer teacher, Mr. George Dent, father of Mr. J. M. Dent of Everyman's Library.

Mr. Dent was fortunate in having as his collaborator Miss Freda Hawtrey, who was at that time Principal of Darlington Training College.

In the entrance hall of the Nursery School is a lovely head by Donatello, beautifully framed in marble and bearing the words: "Out of the mouths

of babes and sucklings He has perfected praise." The beauty of this little memorial hall is borne out in all the quiet rooms where the children work and dine, and in the fine conservatory, which is now the bathroom, and which opens out on a large and beautiful garden.

The superintendent of this beautifully equipped and conducted school is Miss Drogan.

No description can be attempted here of the many beautiful indoor Nursery Schools: the Notting Hill Nursery School, under Miss Reid, so deservedly famous for its social as well as its educational work, the Somers Town, the Mary Ward, Romney Road and Union Jack Nursery Schools.

The Gipsy Hill Training College and Practising School has the great advantage of having at its head Miss de Lissa, the well-known pioneer of infant education in Australia. Then there is the Nursery School attached to Goldsmiths' College.

The Mather Training College, Manchester, through its principal, Miss Grace Owen, has won fame not only in this country but in America. The students in the Training College practise in the College Nursery School, which is ably conducted by Miss Marriott, the Ardwick Nursery School, Manchester, of which Miss Steele is the superintendent, and the Salford Nursery School under Miss Bauerkeller.

## PART III

### CHAPTER XII

#### THE NEED FOR THE NURSERY SCHOOL

THE real need for the Nursery School has long been recognised by the people of intelligence who are really interested in the nurture and education of the children of the nation.

Our welfare centres are concerned with the health of the baby up to the age of two. The school doctor examines the five-year-old when he enters the elementary school. What of those precious years between two and five?

Dr. E. W. Hope, Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool, in an article published in *Defective Children*, writes as follows:

The Medical Inspection of children . . . has revealed an amount of mental and physical suffering amongst children previously quite unsuspected—suffering in most cases remediable, in many preventable

Dr. McGregor, Medical Officer of Health for Glasgow, writing in the same book, states:

The Notification of Birth Act has secured supervision of the infant up to the age of one year. The child then passes out of observation, and when it has arrived at school age irremediable damage has too often already been done—deformities preventable by ordinary care and intelligence have been allowed to become permanent. . . . In Glasgow the prevalence of severe rickets is one of the object lessons of life in the poorer districts. We have seen that the most important preventive and curative measures are fresh air, exercise, adequate and suitable diet. In so far as these

conditions are available for the growing child, this disease will be prevented or the severity of the attack mitigated. . . . In Glasgow, where rickets account for over one half of the physically defective children in the schools, the average cost of educating these children is from two to three times that of educating the ordinary school child.

Let us now read the following extract from Sir John Gorst's *Children of the Nation*:

From the point of view of public health these poor little children between babyhood and school age form a very important section of the population. They are the nursery in which deadly microbes and the germs of infectious diseases grow and multiply . . . The incipient smallpox or measles or diphtheria or scarletina which the doctors could have immediately diagnosed and stamped out runs its course, infection is carried into the streets and the schools. The disease of tuberculosis . . . is a terribly fatal disease in this country, causing one-eighth of all the deaths. The favourite breeding-ground of the tuberculosis microbe is the bodies of ill-nourished children. By these they are carried into the streets and into the schools without recognition and check, and this affects the bodies of other children and of the whole population.

Finally let us examine the report of Major Elmslie, the London County Council Medical Officer of Physically Defective Schools.

"Infantile Paralysis has now become the most important cause of crippling among children in London," he says, and he gives a table showing the year of onset for the disease in five hundred and fifty-nine cases. Three hundred and five cases begin between the ages of two and four, as against thirty-six between the ages of five and seven.

Surely we have here the conclusive proof of the need of nurture for our little ones during these critical years!

Are not clinics, sanatoria, special schools, work-houses, industrial schools, not to mention prisons and asylums, a heavy tax on the ratepayer? It is not an exaggeration to say that a quarter the cost

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of the maintenance of a hopelessly diseased or defective child would maintain four normal children in good health.

The torrent of diseased children that is pouring ceaselessly through our school clinics would surely in time begin to shrink if the causes of their ailments were dealt with in the earlier years.

The gap in the national system which allowed for no education and no nurture for children between the ages of two and five years was bridged by Mr. Fisher in 1918. This Education Act, if it had been carried into full operation as far as the clauses on the Nursery School education are concerned, would have gone far to solve the whole question of nurture for young children. Mr. Fisher indicated that Nursery Schools (preferably open-air) should be established for children of two to five years. In his speech delivered in the House of Commons on 10th August, he states:

We do not desire to compel the provision of Nursery Schools, but we intend to enable such schools, attendance at which must be voluntary, to be aided from the rates, and we believe that in the development of these schools, which will, we trust, often be open-air schools, we may reasonably look for a real improvement in the health of young children.

Unfortunately, when the Geddes Axe fell, this clause had only been put into operation on a small scale. But everything that has been tested since the year 1918 in regard to these schools shows that the clauses themselves were entirely necessary.

The most urgent need for this new reform is surely to be found in the poorest areas, where the wastage of child-life goes on unchecked. Here indeed we must be as one, however divided in politics, creed or temperament. There is surely no argument that can reasonably be advanced against the provision of Nursery Schools in the slum areas.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RACHEL McMILLAN NURSERY SCHOOL

Educate every child as if he were your own—**RACHEL  
McMILLAN.**

EARLY in the year 1917 the Misses McMillan had won the consent of the Board of Education to the extension of the Nursery School premises, half the cost of which was to be met by the Board. On 3rd August, 1917, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, Minister of Education, proclaimed the new premises open, and the school became the memorial of Miss Rachel McMillan.

Two years later the London County Council entered into an agreement with Miss Margaret McMillan, in virtue of which she was allowed to continue the experiment for five years on condition that she relinquished all claim to the property, including the buildings, in September 1924. The school received the first grant from the London County Council in September 1920.

In the summer of 1921 the Nursery School was full to overflowing. There was an average attendance of one hundred and thirty-five children, and almost daily we were obliged to turn away mothers who were seeking admittance for their children. The school was now recognised by the Board of Education as a Training Centre for certificated teachers, and we were also training private students for the Nursery School work.

Miss McMillan was very anxious to try the

five children. We have come to the conclusion that it is more satisfactory, as well as more economical, to take the smaller group. Where there are fifty children we need a head and an assistant. In the smaller shelters the head can dispense with a full-time assistant if she has a capable student-teacher to help her.

The question of the grouping of the children inside the shelter has now to be faced. We find that eight Toddlers make a satisfactory group, ten three-year-olds and twelve four-year-olds. Of course the question cannot really be disposed of as easily as this, for the number of children the teacher can manage at one time depends almost entirely on what she happens to be teaching at that particular time.

The head of each department must, then, have three to five helpers. What type of helper shall they be? We, in this school, are fortunate, for side by side with the Nursery School the Training Centre for Nursery School teachers has sprung up, and so the problem is solved for us, as for all Nursery Schools attached to Training Colleges. But what of the other Nursery Schools? Surely it would be an excellent plan if *all* Nursery Schools could be centres of training for different types of social and educational work. Would not training in the Nursery School work be of great use to the future helper in the welfare centre, the district visitor, the private nurse and the missionary? When the great possibilities afforded by this type of training are fully realised, there should be no difficulty in the staffing of our Nursery Schools.

#### *Domestic Arrangements*

There should be a small washhouse in connection with every large Nursery School. Towels, table-

cloths, overalls, are constantly in need of washing, and it is much more satisfactory to have this need met on the premises.

The kitchen should occupy a central place amongst the buildings, and the cook should be carefully chosen, for her work is of the utmost importance. In the Rachel McMillan Nursery School the preparation and cooking of the meals for three hundred children is undertaken by one cook and one helper. When the meals are ready the food is placed in covered vessels and carried to the different departments by the helpers.

### *Diet*

The most important item of the children's diet is, of course, the milk. The directions issued by the Medical Department of the London County Council are to the effect that every child shall be supplied with one pint of milk daily for drinking—the pudding milk to be allowed for extra. In practice we find that every child does not consume one pint of milk a day. The children who have been a long time with us drink the most milk. Sometimes when a little one first comes to the Nursery School he will hardly touch milk unless it is sweetened or flavoured with cocoa. But time soon remedies this. Acting under the directions of our Medical Officer, Dr. Hogarth, we pasteurise our milk and strain it—it is never boiled.

For breakfast we give the children porridge three or four times a week—cocoa and bread and dripping the remaining days.

The same dinner is never given twice in one week. We have meat dinners twice a week, and one fish dinner; on the remaining days we give eggs, soup, savoury pudding, or vegetable stew, according to

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the time of year. For "afters" (to quote the children) we give various kinds of milk pudding, treacle suet, jam roly, currant dumpling, custard, chocolate pudding, stewed fruit, etc. Always with their dinner the children eat a hard rusk.

Tea consists of milk or cocoa with bread and butter or margarine, jam or cake.

Menu showing dinners given during one week at the Rachel McMillan Nursery School:

	WINTER	SUMMER
<i>Monday</i>	Meat and Potatoes Currant Pudding Toddlers, Milk Pudding	Scrambled Eggs, Potatoes and Peas Jam Pudding
<i>Tuesday</i>	Vegetable Stew Treacle Pudding (Suet)	Meat, Potatoes and Vegetables Rice Pudding and Raw Fruit
<i>Wednesday</i>	Fish Pie Jam Roly	Fish Pie Custard and Fruit
<i>Thursday</i>	Meat and Potatoes Rice Pudding Oranges	Vegetable Stew Treacle Pudding
<i>Friday</i>	Soup and Dumplings Batter Pudding	Meat and Potatoes Cornflour Shape

We find that the appetites of the children improve very much when they have been in attendance for some weeks. The regularity of the life, the open air and the opportunity for exercise soon make good trenchermen of the inmates of the Nursery School.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FINANCE OF THE NURSERY SCHOOL

"Men cease to regard money?" cries Bobus of Houndsditch. "What else do all men strive for? The very Bishop informs me that Christianity cannot get on without a minimum of four thousand five hundred in its pocket. Cease to regard money? That will be Doomsday in the afternoon!"

"Oh, Bobus, my opinion is somewhat different. My opinion is that the Higher Powers have not yet determined on destroying this Lower World. A respectable, ever-increasing minority who do strive for something higher than money, I with confidence anticipate. . . . Thou wilt not join our small minority, thou? Not until Doomsday in the afternoon? Well *then* at least thou wilt join it, thou and the majority in mass!"—CARLYLE

We are told by those in authority that we shall not see Nursery Schools established in the country as part of the educational system until we bring down the cost to a figure not much higher than that which represents the cost of keeping a child in the infant school. This is the problem which faces the Nursery School teacher to-day.

We must have more air space than the authorities have allowed the infant schools in the past, and we must have a garden. But the buildings we require are very inexpensive, and so is the furniture.

We must have more teachers. But why should we not work out a system by means of which many of our young people may receive a training in return for the services they render the children?

We must provide food for the children. But we have proved that we can provide a generous diet which will satisfy the requirements of the Medical Department of the London County Council for an

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average cost of half a crown a week for each child. In some districts the parents will be able to pay the whole cost of the food, but in slum areas of course it is often impossible for them to do so.

We must have a big school (two to four hundred children), for only so are we able to staff economically.

As a result of our experiment in the Rachel McMillan Nursery School this year we can definitely state that the total cost for each child works out at a little more than fourteen pounds a year. It must be remembered, when considering this cost, that we supply the children with three meals a day, and that the majority of parents are unable to pay the whole cost of the food; in districts where perhaps the need is not so great, the cost will therefore be less.

We are hoping next year to be able to quote a lower figure, for the cost of food is coming down, and experience has taught us how to economise further in various ways which do not affect the welfare of the children.

## PART IV

### CHAPTER XV

#### THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,  
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonders that could be,  
*Locksley Hall.*

HARD by the Rachel McMillan Nursery School stands the handsome church of St. Nicholas. Written in Latin on a monument of white marble we may read an interesting inscription:

Richard, son of John Evelyn, rests under this stone, and with him rests everything that a father's love can cherish and lament when deprived of. The fair face no longer as of old, bright with the smile of intelligence; the unusual grace of manner which few can attain, which all who knew him will miss, the simple talk in French or Latin languages which he took in with his Mother's milk—all silent now: He had begun the study of the arts, and with the principles of arts had learned those of piety as well; and was so fond of his books that only death could tear him from them. His example showed how much natural quickness, discipline and labour, when united, could achieve. Marvellous as a child, what would he have been when old, had fate allowed him length of life? But God decreed otherwise. A slight fever carried him off after he had lived five years, eight months and a few days . . . What mortals love, let them beware never to love too well.

Little Richard Evelyn died on 27th January, 1658. His father, John Evelyn, in his famous diary, writes of him at length. We are told that at the age of eighteen months he could read perfectly any of the English, Latin, French or Gothic letters, pronouncing the first three languages exactly. Before

his fifth year he could "read most written hands, decline all nouns, conjugate the verbs regular, and most of the irregular," and "could turn English into Latin and *vice versa*, construe and prove what he read. . . . The number of verses he could recite was prodigious. Seeing a Plautus in his father's hand, he asked what book it was, and being told it was a comedy and too difficult for him, he wept for sorrow."

We are told that he gave grave advice to his little brother John. He was "but a child," and he must be excused when he was impatient or naughty. From the dizzy heights of his advanced years Richard looked down with love and compassion upon his little brother.

Poor little Richard Evelyn! It is interesting to note what, in his father's judgment, was the cause of his untoward death. "In my opinion," writes John Evelyn, "he was suffocated by the women and the maids that tended him and covered him with too hot blankets as he lay in a cradle near an excessive fire in a closed room." The unhygienic conditions which prevailed at the time were the cause of many premature deaths. Two of the daughters of John Evelyn, beautiful and accomplished girls, died of the dread disease smallpox, and of the eight children of whom his family was composed only two survived him.

Thus we see that care and money could not save the children of the well-to-do three hundred years ago. What then must have been the condition of the poor, when even the educated classes had so little knowledge of hygiene?

Almost more deplorable was the condition of the children of the working classes one hundred and fifty years ago. Children of all ages were employed in our factories, apprenticed at the age of

seven to a life of martyrdom. Robert Owen tells how, in the year 1815, he visited the mills where little ones of four and five were employed for twelve hours daily. In one instance he quotes the employment of a baby of three. "The way in which these infants are first employed," he says, "is to pick up the cotton waste from the floor—to go under the machines where bigger people cannot creep. The smaller they are the more conveniently they can go under the machines."

These little ones sometimes worked for fourteen and fifteen hours daily. They entered the mill gates at five and six o'clock at nights. They had no regular meal times, but ate their food when and where they could in the dust-laden atmosphere of the mill. They were not allowed to sit down, and so utterly weary were they in the mornings that the punishment for late-comers had to be made very severe.

It is interesting to note that one of the doctors commissioned to report on the health of the children who served in the mills, commented adversely on the long hours, and spoke of "the natural appetency of all young creatures to locomotive exercise and open air." Surely this enlightened friend of children would further the cause of Open-Air Nursery Schools to-day!

It is a far cry from the time when our little ones toiled in the mines and the mills, goaded by the stick of the overseer, to the day of welfare centres, children's clinics, free kindergartens and nursery schools. Yet we are only on the threshold of the new era. We have as yet hardly begun to touch the fringe of the work, which will surely find its culmination in the twentieth century.

What do we want? Well, to begin with, we want Open-Air Nurseries and Nursery Schools in all our

slum areas, and if the work is to be done thoroughly we must co-operate with the parents; we want Club Houses for the mothers, run in connection with the Nursery Schools.

It is so easy to criticise our fellow-creatures! We point the finger of scorn at the white-faced woman who stands outside the public-house with her glass of beer, rocking her baby in her arms, as she enjoys a gossip with her friends. We laugh at the antics of half a dozen giddy factory girls who are practising the latest dances to tunes ground by the wheezy old barrel-organ at the corner. *We* prefer to chat over the harmless tea-cup—to dance in the comparative privacy of the ball-room, but surely the same instincts are at work in us and in them?

If we lament the fact that women haunt the public-houses, we must provide some counter-attraction. The conditions are difficult to-day, when a large majority of the fathers of the little ones who attend our schools are out of work. Morning after morning they seek employment, and heartsick return to their haunts under the archway facing the school. Many of the mothers *can* find work, and so they do double duty. They scrub and clean, or work in the factories all day, and return home at night to "do a bit of washing." There is no comfort to be found in the miserable place they call home. They want light and companionship. They want to live and to forget.

We must open clubs for our mothers in connection with our Nursery Schools. We shall want one or two good-sized rooms, a piano, a sewing-machine and books. The Club House must be open every evening, and sometimes there must be games and dancing for those young mothers who are little more than girls.

We shall show the mothers how to cut out and

make simple garments for their little ones. We shall buy good hard-wearing material, sell it to them at reasonable prices, and show them how to work the machine. We shall give simple lessons in hygiene and cookery, and talk to them about what we are trying to do for their children. We shall make it possible for them to get light refreshments at reasonable prices. In time such a club might become almost, if not quite, self-supporting.

And then? When we have our Nursery Schools and clubs for mothers? *Then* we must have Open-Air Boarding Schools—Camp Schools—not too far from their poor homes, for the children of our densely-crowded slum areas.

The children of the well-to-do have boarding schools. Many a beautiful house is left half-empty during the long school terms. There are boarding schools enough and to spare for the upper and middle classes—but what of our little slum-dwellers?

We should like to send our children at the age of seven straight from the Nursery School to a Camp School, where their education could be continued under similar conditions, but without breaking any links with the home. So we should hope to create a new race which would wipe out the disgrace of the slum from our midst

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